
Emil Biørn’s oil–painted canvas depicting four episodes from the Flatey Book, the largest medieval Icelandic manuscript.
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LETTER TO MEMBERS

Dear Morris Society Members:

2019 brought us three welcome new members to the Governing Committee: David Lowden, Sarah Leonard, Melissa Buron, Mark Samuels Lasner. Paul Acker and Jane Carlin remain president and vice–president, Mark serves as assistant treasurer, Anna Wager as treasurer, and KellyAnn Fitzpatrick co–ordinates our annual Modern Language Association sessions.

Events and Outreach: Morna O’Neill has taken on the role of Coordinator for Events and Outreach, including Membership. She can be reached at wmsusmembership@gmail.com. As part of our efforts to stay useful and beautiful to our members, we tiated a membership survey in April 2019. Our sincere thanks to those of you who took the time to share your thoughts about the society. Based on your feedback, we are considering how we can organize more events and better communicate through social media our enthusiasm for William Morris and his work in a way that moves beyond the academic. We have established a sub–committee to look at our social media and online presence and communication, and we are in discussions with the Yale Center for British Art about planning events for 2019–2020. Stay tuned!

To reward those who completed the survey we awarded an original broadside by Stephen Lee–Davis to five members, who were chosen using an online random number generator. The recipients of the broadside were Linda Zieper, Donald Morris, Kathleen Sheldon, Julie Long Gallegos, and Kurt Henry.

New Affiliation: This past winter, Maureen Meister, acting on behalf of the William Morris Society in the United States, applied for affiliation with the College Art Association, and in March we learned that the application was approved. Founded in 1911, CAA promotes the study of art, art history, and related disciplines and has more than 12,000 members. Every February CAA sponsors a well–attended conference, and, as an affiliated society, we are guaranteed a 90–minute session. We plan to launch our first session in New York City in 2021, which means we must settle on a topic by the beginning of 2020. We will also organize a meeting and off–site tour. We’re now listed — under W! — in CAA’s Affiliated Societies Directory: https://tinyurl.com/WilliamMorrisSociety.

January 2020 Sessions at the Modern Language Association in Seattle: Last but not least, we have two fine sessions scheduled for the January Seattle convention of the MLA: “Re–evaluating the Pre–Raphaelites,” moderated by Anna Wager, with speakers Andrea Rager, Monica Bowern, Imogen Hart and Julie Codell; and “Ecosocialism and the Late Victorians,” moderated by Florence Boos, with speakers Heidi Renée Aijala, Jude Nixon and Frank Palmieri. For a fuller description and abstracts, please see page 43. Information about times and locations will be posted on our website and sent to members via e–letter. We will also host an excursion and meet for a convivial lunch or dinner.

Transatlantic Ties: In addition, several members of the Governing Committee visited the UK William Morris Society this winter and spring, and we look forward to increased collaboration with the UK William Morris Society.

With best wishes to all from the Governing Committee:

FROM ARCHITECTURE TO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY:
GEORGE BARTON—MORRIS DISCIPLE
AND ARTS AND CRAFTS ADVOCATE

Maureen Meister

“It’s the people who make the buildings interesting,” a renowned architectural historian once said to me. Many people contribute to the creation of a building—the architect, the client, the builder, and even politicians—but most historians focus on the architect. We are drawn to these visionaries. In 2014 I published a book about a group of Boston architects, active at the turn of the twentieth century, who stood among the leaders of Boston’s Society of Arts and Crafts. Chartered in 1897, it was the organization that defined the Arts and Crafts movement of the region. Several of the architects were prominent nationally, including Ralph Adams Cram, Charles D. Maginnis, and R. Clipston Sturgis. Several were notable educators, including H. Langford Warren, who established the architecture program at Harvard and became the architecture school’s first dean. Another intriguing member of this circle was Lois Lilley Howe, one of the country’s earliest female design professionals. Yet for his personal story, George Edward Barton was most remarkable. He was energetic, imaginative, and—above all—indomitable.

Privileged in his youth, Barton began his adult life as an architect. In the mid-1890s, probably 1895, he traveled to England and visited William Morris. The adventurous Bostonian would be inspired by the encounter time and again through his career. Morris’s social concerns can be seen in Barton’s pursuits as an architect, and Morris’s regard for craftsmanship inspired Barton as a founder of the Society of Arts and Crafts. In his early thirties, Barton confronted the first of many maladies. Rallying time and again, he ultimately participated in establishing the National Society for the Promotion of Occupational Therapy and became its first president. Morris inspired him in this endeavor, too. For playing a key role in the history of occupational therapy, Barton is recognized today around the world.

The story of Barton’s career begins conventionally. He was born in 1871 and raised in the Boston suburb of Brookline by a family that was “steeped in the arts and letters.” His father, a banker, and his mother counted Louisa May Alcott among their friends. When the time came to prepare for a career, Barton sought to train as an architect and was fortunate to land a position as a draftsman under Henry Vaughan. Vaughan was English and had been employed by George Frederick Bodley, recognized in England during the 1870s for his revival–style Perpendicular Gothic churches. In 1881 Vaughan arrived in Boston, worked briefly for the esteemed architect Henry Hobson Richardson, and then launched his own practice. Vaughan soon attracted attention for his design of a Perpendicular revival chapel for St. Paul’s School in Concord, New Hampshire, begun in 1886. Boston’s young architects were impressed by it and abandoned the Romanesque revival popularized by Richardson for this new ideal. Among the admirers was Ralph Adams Cram, who called Vaughan “the apostle of the new dispensation.”

In the early 1890s, Barton took a logical career step by moving from Vaughan’s office to the office of Cram, Wentworth and Goodhue. At the time, the firm was designing and building All Saints Episcopal Church in the Ashmont neighborhood of Dorchester, 1891–1894. Featuring the high walls and large lancet windows of England’s Perpendicular churches, All Saints would influence the course of church architecture in the United States for decades to come. When coordinating the decoration of All Saints, the architects brought together an exceptional team of sculptors, wood carvers, and stained glass artists whom Barton would have encountered.

In 1895 Barton traveled to England and France to study domestic and church architecture. Most likely it was during this sojourn when he spent time in London with William Morris, the renowned leader of England’s Arts and Crafts movement. Years later, Barton’s future wife would describe Morris as her husband’s “old master,” but she didn’t expand upon how Barton was engaged. Morris and his adherents were dismayed by the factory system and its abuse of labor, and they encouraged opportunities for workers to earn their livelihoods as craftsmen. As a disciple of Morris, Barton credited the Englishman with arousing his enthusiasm “for sociological study.”

Figure 1. George Barton, photograph by Frederick H. Evans, 1899.
Richardson and Charles Eliot Norton, the Harvard art history professor. In May of 1896, the architect Bertram Goodhue, Cram’s business partner, visited Morris at his home just months prior to Morris’s death. 

When Barton returned to Boston, he entered the office of R. Clipston Sturgis. Educated at St. Paul’s and Harvard, Sturgis had trained in England, and as a designer, he would show an affinity to English architectural traditions and trends. By the late 1890s, Boston’s rising generation of architects was in regular contact with colleagues in England. Several architects in London had helped organize the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, whose members held their first show in 1888. In 1897 several Boston architects, along with craftsmen and a small group of sympathizers, founded the Society of Arts and Crafts. Barton was a charter member and served as the society’s first secretary. During the following decade, he continued to be an active participant, sitting on the organization’s governing Council and on two committees—one that ran workshops and another that promoted ecclesiastical furnishings.

A major issue for architects of the era was the challenge of designing inexpensive yet comfortable dwellings for the working class. In 1898 Barton won the prestigious Shattuck Prize, awarded by the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics’ Association for a plan for worker housing. A few months later, he returned to England. A portrait photograph taken by British architectural photographer Frederick H. Evans and dated February 1899 places Barton in England at this time (figure 1). On this journey, he explored the model worker village of Port Sunlight, near Birkenhead, established by Lever Brothers in 1888. It was the subject of an article that Barton published in the spring of 1899 in the Architectural Review. He observed, “One of the greatest sources of just discontent is that, with a life of labor, the workman has nothing to make him or his family love or be interested in what is his house and what should be his home.” Port Sunlight provided attractive dwellings, schools, a social hall, and a village store for the workers employed in the soap works.

Barton was an architect with ideals, and he flourished professionally. He was elected a junior member of the Boston Society of Architects in 1900 and was elected to the American Institute of Architects in 1901. In 1902 the partnership of Sturgis and Barton was announced—a relationship that would last seven years. With Sturgis, Barton pursued his interest in building with a social mission. The partners designed the South Bay Union, 1901–03, a South End community center that no longer stands (figure 2). They also designed the Franklin Union, 1906–08, a technical training school in the South End, today the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (figure 3). Both buildings served Boston’s immigrants. Other commissions served Boston’s elite, such as the Winsor School, begun in 1908 while Barton was still in the office. Major projects, led by Sturgis, included a study for the Museum of Fine Arts that
prepared the way for the institution’s move to Huntington Avenue, 1903–1905; the design and construction of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Mary and St. John in Manila, the Philippines, 1905; and the First National Bank Building, Boston, 1906. The partners regularly turned to craftsmen members of the Society of Arts and Crafts to embellish their buildings (figure 4).

On one of Barton’s trips to England, he befriended Sydney Cockerell, whom Morris had employed when acquiring a collection of medieval manuscripts. After Morris died, Cockerell worked as an agent, and Barton made a small but important contribution by putting the trustees of the Boston Public Library in touch with him.19 Between 1900 and 1901, Cockerell purchased several medieval manuscripts for the library. Two of them had belonged to Morris.20

Like many of the founders of the Society of Arts and Crafts, Barton delved into a wide range of interests. Early in the twentieth century, he wrote a libretto for an opera, “The Pipe of Desire,” composed by Frederick S. Converse and performed in 1906 at Boston’s Jordan Hall. In 1910 it became the first opera written by Americans to be performed at New York’s Metropolitan Opera House. It also was the first opera to be performed there in English during the regular season.21

Barton’s many endeavors are all the more impressive in light of the fact that by 1901 he had contracted tuberculosis.22 Despite the fatigue, he persevered, and we may assume that Sturgis was supportive. Yet early in 1907, Sturgis drafted a letter to Barton seeking to dissolve their partnership.23 The men apparently worked something out, but in 1909, the partnership came to an end.

Undaunted, Barton left Massachusetts for Colorado to recuperate. In the mountain air of Colorado Springs, he managed to improve and established himself there as an architect.24 His personal life, however, had unraveled. By this time, he had married and become a father; sadly, his wife and child left him, likely due to his illness and the stress that they were experiencing.25

Once recovered, Barton’s energy and attraction to social issues got the better of him. When Colorado’s governor asked him to investigate starvation among the state’s farmers, he accepted the commission. Caught in the cold, Barton’s left foot froze and gangrene set in, requiring the amputation of two toes. The surgery did not go well, and the left side of his body became paralyzed. In December of 1912, he sent a letter from Saint Luke’s Hospital in New York City to his old club in Boston, the Tavern Club, describing a “year of endless pain.”26 His foot was better, he wrote, but the paralysis was not. Nevertheless, he had been using his time creatively. He had finished a tragedy, “Nero,” describing it as “a domestic drama upon which I put in about fifteen heart-breaking years.” Back in Colorado Springs, Barton’s most important architectural project was nearing completion. The Myron Stratton Home opened in 1913, a refuge for the poor of Colorado. The Spanish revival buildings with red tile roofs anchor a park-like campus that is now dedicated to housing for the elderly (figure 5).

Severely disabled, in 1913 Barton entered a sanitarium in Clifton Springs, New York, east of Rochester.27 He spent more than a year there, battling depression. The turning point came during a visit by Elwood Worcester, rector of Boston’s Emmanuel Church. Worcester persuaded Barton to see that even if life wasn’t worth living for himself, he could strive to recover to serve “the other fellow”—his fellow man.28 Still paralyzed and a
patient in the sanitarium, Barton bought a simple clapboarded dwelling that was located nearby in Clifton Springs (figure 6). He would have been attracted to the front porches that ran across the first and second stories.

Barton’s thoughts turned to how he might provide a better setting for convalescent recovery. The house had to offer an alternative to the hospital rooms that he had found so numbing. From his wheelchair, he oversaw alterations to the building, adding a new bathroom on the first floor and converting the dining room into his bedroom. He was attentive to decorative features, installing two stained glass windows, and he hung landscape paintings in the living room that came from his boyhood home in Brookline. On the property was an old red barn that Barton rebuilt to provide a carpentry shop on the first floor and a studio upstairs. He also acquired a vacant lot that he turned into a garden. Doggedly he pushed himself to recover by engaging in carpentry and gardening. On Barton’s forty-third birthday, March 7, 1914, Consolation House officially opened, welcoming convalescents. It was a school, workshop, and vocational bureau. Barton found a new calling and began writing about his investigations into occupational therapy. To support his work, he hired a twenty-five-year-old secretary, Isabel Gladwin Newton. She was drawn to his boyish air and admired his sense of humor despite the painful experiences he had endured.

Three years after opening, Consolation House was the setting for the founding of the National Society for the Promotion of Occupational Therapy. Among those who gathered in Clifton Springs were Eleanor Slagle of Chicago’s Hull House and William Rush Dunton, Jr., a psychiatrist at the Sheppard Asylum in Towson, Maryland (figure 7). Barton was elected the organization’s first president. The corporation was formed for the “advancement of occupation as a therapeutic measure; for the study of the effect of occupation upon the human being; and for the scientific dispensation of this knowledge.” In 1921 the society would be renamed the American Occupational Therapy Association, and it would grow to claim 60,000 members today.

Barton and Newton were well matched, and they married in 1918. Two years later, they had a baby boy. Yet Barton’s good fortune only lasted a few more years. His tuberculosis returned, and after a short struggle, he died in 1923.
Barton was driven by idealism. Although not a Socialist like Morris, he shared Morris's desire to improve the lives of others. Like both Morris and the founders of the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, Barton believed that joy could be derived through handicraft. As an architect and a composer, he approached life with imagination. As a founder of occupational therapy, advancing self-help through active, practical work, he was an energetic leader. As a man plagued by recurring illness and severe disabilities, he refused to accept defeat. George Barton was indomitable.

Maureen Meister, an art and architectural historian, is the author of *Arts and Crafts Architecture: History and Heritage in New England* and *Architecture and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Boston: Harvard's H. Langford and George Barton*. She has served as editor of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* and is a research associate at the Massachusetts Historical Society.


8. Ibid.


17. Barton was elected to junior membership in the Boston Society of Architects on March 2, 1900, and elected an associate member of the American Institute of Architects on Dec. 2, 1901.

18. The partnership was announced under “Architects’ Removals, Etc.,” *American Architect and Building News*, vol. 77, no. 1385 (July 12, 1902), p. x.

19. Barton recommended Cockerell to Boston Public Library trustee Henry Bowditch. Early in 1900, Barton contacted Cockerell, who replied in a letter in May expressing his interest in serving as an agent for the library. Barton then forwarded the letter to Bowditch. See letter from Sydney Cockerell to George Edward Barton, May 30, 1900, forwarded by Barton to Henry Bowditch, Nov. 1900, Rare Books, Boston Public Library, MS Eng 147.


23. For the draft letter to George Barton, see Architectural Notebooks of Richard Clippston Sturgis, Boston Athenaeum, series 2, no. 38, Feb.–April 1907.


30. In a letter to a fellow founder, Barton wrote that he had been the first secretary of the Society of Arts and Crafts and remembered “how easily things slipped out of the hands of the ones who alone were fitted to control its policies.” Evidently his sympathies had been with the craftsmen and a more socialistic direction for the Arts and Crafts organization. See letter from Barton to William Rush Dunton, Jr., Dec. 26, 1916, Wilma L. West Archives, American Occupational Therapy Association, Bethesda, MD.

The Arts and Crafts Movement and Norwegian–American Identity
David Steven Faldet

In Morris' first work on the arts and crafts, “The Lesser Arts,” he praised the vernacular truth, the sympathy with “the land they were made for” in traditional artisan furniture, weaving, and other handwork. The traditional lesser arts were, “alive amidst the very nature they were wrought into, and of which they are so completely a part.” He was speaking of vernacular English tradition, a tradition he placed in positive contrast with the “French and fine” imported tradition of stately homes he traced back 250 years to the end of Tudor gothic. Morris argued that decorative arts were a “peasant art,” an art of common working people whose experience was rural and provincial rather than cosmopolitan: “given as freely to the yeoman’s house, and the humble village church as to the lord’s palace or the mighty cathedral.” He believed that the best work should take its inspiration from the prototypes of craft tradition: “ancient art in a narrower but a more intimate, a more kindly form, the monuments of our own land.” Artisans must give respectful attention to their country’s vernacular past.

It is worth attending to how Morris’ arguments translated to other national contexts, and even more interesting to see what happened when artisans were themselves transplanted, taking arts and crafts traditions from one country to practice, promote, and hand down in another. This is particularly true of Norway, of Norwegian and Norwegian–American artisans, and of one of Morris’ most devoted followers in America, Jane Addams, who promoted Arts and Crafts heritage traditions among the displaced in Chicago as a way of lifting their self-esteem and of promoting her ideal of a multi-ethnic United States.

While England, in Morris’ life, led an empire upon which the sun never set, Norway, the last country Morris attempted to visit in his life, was an occupied nation. Its ruling or official class had served the Kingdom of Denmark from 1536 and Sweden after the 1814 Treaty of Kiel until the dissolution of the union with Sweden in 1905. Norway’s Arts and Crafts movement was propelled by a stronger impetus of patriotic nationalism than England’s. The 1890s Arts and Crafts rejuvenation was led by artist and craftsman Gerhard Munthe (1849–1929). Though self-consciously Norwegian, Munthe acknowledged “the unanimity with which everyone follows the English.” Munthe’s imagination was fueled by the folk tradition of Norway, with its roots in the art and legends of the Vikings. In the 1890s, however, Munthe was also informed by the Studio magazine which featured his decorative work in an 1896 issue. The pre-modern culture evoked by Munthe was a rural world of land-owning farmer/artisans, “true Norwegians” who had nothing to do with the official class. Though trained in Germany and successful as a naturalist painter, Munthe turned to a flattened, decorative style and folk motifs around 1890. He also wrote articles praising the craft culture of rural Norway. As Morris' career in the decorative arts began with the creation of his home, Red House, so Munthe's transformation began with the 1886 creation of his home, Levelle, in Lysaker, a suburb of Oslo (Kristiania) favored by artists. The house was painted in traditional farmer colors of bright red, strong yellow, and indigo blue, and Munthe worked throughout the ‘90s to furnish it with antique furniture and textiles collected in his travels to study the folk culture of rural Norway. In creating his home his rule was “to be honest and not dress up in borrowed clothes” – not caving in to international and imported fashions, but using the best elements of traditional Norwegian design and color. Like Morris, Munthe, as a craftsman, branched out into work in book illustration and design, type design, wallpaper design, textile design, furniture design, and interior design.

Munthe received significant commissions for decorative work. His most celebrated is the Fairytale Room in the Holmenkollen Park Hotel, designed originally in 1894 by architect Balthazar Lange for use as a sanatorium. The tables, chairs, and carved wall reliefs Munthe designed pick up the medieval dragon style of the building and employ color with a head-dizzying flourish. Like Morris, Munthe turned to earlier models for book design when he became the chief artistic designer for a version of Snorre Sturlason’s Kings’ Sagas on which he worked from 1896 to 1899. Like Morris, Munthe designed a new font for this work that would hold its own against heavily drawn illustrations. He also devised geometrical decorative borders. The book put a handsome and substantial version of Norwegian kings’ history on display.

“Ynglinge Saga”, title and decorative illustration by Gerhard Munthe for Snorre Sturlason Kongesagen, Stenersen and Co., Kristiania, 1899. [from Wikimedia Commons]
in the hands of Norwegians on either side of the Atlantic when Norway was in the last, crucial phase of pushing for independence from Sweden. Munthe’s nationalism helped inspire his work with The Norwegian Home Arts and Crafts Association, beginning in 1897. By the end of the 1890s Norwegian Home Arts and Crafts Association workshops in Oslo and Trondheim produced tapestry versions of Munthe’s flat fairytale compositions. When the judges at the Universal Exposition in Paris in 1900 awarded a gold medal to some of these works they wrote of Munthe in their commendation:

“To him is due the honors of having created in our day a real national style of decorative art in Norway, thanks to his special knowledge of the old art and his suggestive re-creating talent. … [T]hese compositions, we say, are fantastical, but show a very individual modern art, even though archaic and tied closely to the old Norwegian traditions.” Munthe’s nationalism showed through in his happy reinvention of old things Norwegian.

In the decade when Munthe was developing his Arts and Crafts style and the Norwegian Home Arts and Crafts Association was established, the largest urban population center for emigrated Norwegians in America was Chicago. The Windy City’s Norwegian residents called themselves “the Colony” to signal both the size of their group and their strong sense of allegiance to the Norwegian motherland. Though large by both Norwegian and Norwegian–American standards, “the Colony” was a minor linguistic subculture of Chicago. Leaders of the Norwegian–American community were mindful of this, as well as of the more maddening cultural insult of US culture at large recognizing an Italian, Christopher Columbus, as the first European discoverer of the continent, rather than the true first settler from Europe, the Norwegian Leif Erikson (a fact that William Morris accepted and acknowledged in his “Prologue” to The Earthly Paradise). These Norwegian–Americans were anxious to have their cultural heritage recognized. They were aided in this wish by two women from Illinois, Jane Addams (1860–1935) and Ellen Gates Starr (1859–1940). Addams and Starr brought the Arts and Crafts philosophy of Morris to the lives of European peasants transplanted to the streets of Chicago, using examples of Norwegian craft to stir the minds and imaginations of both impoverished immigrants and affluent Yankees.

Addams and Starr met during the 1877–78 academic year, when they studied at Rockford Female Seminary where they read Ruskin. While traveling in Europe in 1888, the two women decided to create a settlement house that would aid the poorest of Chicago’s new immigrant community and give their neighborhood a multi–ethnic cultural center. To prepare, Addams visited Toynbee Hall in East London, established in 1884. By fall 1889, immigrant reading groups in the cultural enrichment program at Chicago’s newly established Hull House were studying Ruskin and Morris along with greats like Shakespeare. Alongside the cosmopolitan education offered in programs at Hull House, Addams stressed connection with vernacular folk traditions. She used a native Illinoisan, Abraham Lincoln, as an example of the triumph of egalitarianism:

We were often distressed by the children of immigrant parents who were ashamed of the pit whence they were dug, who repudiated the language and customs of their elders, and counted themselves successful as they were able to ignore the past. Whenever I held up Lincoln for their admiration as the greatest American, I invariably pointed out his marvelous power to retain and utilize past experiences.

Addams was conscious that the American situation tempted the transplanted to forget the soil in which they got their start across the ocean. Her lesson about Lincoln demonstrates her belief in the importance of complementary identity: her trust that deepening a sense of a homespun past, whether it was rural American or foreign, would increase the chances of those who used Hull House to make their own way in a new society.

In emulation of Ruskin’s St. George’s Guild, Hull House included a studio wing that introduced fine art to the local community of largely immigrant poor and working people. The first art exhibit at the Butler Art Gallery opened in 1891, heralded by the Chicago Tribune as “Chicago’s
Toynbee Hall.” The wing added to the original Hull House was also the site for concerts and for classes in the arts. That Addams and her community were devoted to Morris is evidenced by her anecdote that in painting the walls of the Hull House Theater, some residents thought it appropriate to include a mural of William Morris at his loom, to go alongside murals of Tolstoy and Lincoln—other heroes of the common person.

Chicago's Columbian Exposition honoring the 400th anniversary of Columbus’s arrival in America provided Norwegians and Norwegian Americans a dramatic opportunity to connect with Norwegian history and craft culture alongside commercial exhibits that promoted the country of Norway. Chicago gave prominent place to Norway in the 1893 Exhibition, during a decade when Norwegians were agitating for freedom from Sweden and Norwegian Americans were anxious to see their contributions to the building of their new country acknowledged. Among the 149 works of fine art in Norway's exhibit in the western annex of the Art Building was a set of paintings that marked the turning point in Gerhard Munthe's career. Though he also sent naturalistic oils, Munthe contributed eleven watercolor illustrations for Norwegian fairy tales or subjects from his imagination, works that had created a sensation earlier in the year when exhibited in Oslo at the “Black and White Exhibition.” The works included “The Daughters of the Northern Lights,” where three blonde-haired princesses are visited in their bedroom by three polar bear suitors. The design is Munthe's version of the “East of the Sun, West of the Moon” tale collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe, a story Morris also has the Northern wanderers tell in *The Earthly Paradise*. In “The Wise Bird” an ageing king leaves behind his castle to venture into the natural world, where he comes face to face with a raven in an enchanted wood.

The same Exposition that introduced the Ferris Wheel and created a sensation with its Electricity Building, also provided the first American showing of Munthe's earliest works recasting Norwegian folklore and craft in fresh new form. Traditional craft was also represented. Among the many displays in the Norway's Court of the Manufactures Building were seventeen woodcarving exhibits, many featuring beer tankards or drinking horns. The textiles exhibit included Hardanger embroidery and a range of textiles from The Norwegian Home Arts and Crafts Association. The exhibit in the Woman's Building featured traditional crafts: a basket woven from birch root, wood carvings, historic textiles, and geometric and figurative tapestries designed and woven by Frida Hansen, a follower of Munthe who sometimes worked from his designs. The firm M. Thams and Company, Trondheim, sent a house, “Norway's Pavilion,” built in the heavily decorated dragon style of the medieval stave churches, and intended as a model of “Wooden Houses for Export.” The distinctive structure, given its own place in a glade of trees, provided a bold statement of Norway's long tradition of fine craftsmanship in wood. Norwegian contributions to the Exposition demonstrated the country's rekindled pride in its craft traditions.

Norwegians and Norwegian Americans used the 1893 Exposition to register their slight at America's granting a place of honor to Columbus while paying little heed to the earlier American settlement of Leif Erikson. In 1874, America's premier Norwegian–American scholar, Rasmus B. Anderson, published a book arguing that Columbus quite knowingly followed in the footsteps of Nordic sailors who had voyaged to America in the tenth century and continued their travel there until 1347. An exact replica of the Gogstad Viking ship, the 78-foot Viking, was built at Sandefjord, launched at Bergen, and rowed to America by a Norwegian crew to prove Norwegians were still capable of transatlantic voyages like Erikson's. From New York the crew rowed via the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes to Chicago, where, to the joyful sound of a band of local Norwegian musicians, it was moored on the shore of Lake Michigan close to the Manufactures Building. After the Columbian Exposition Viking was dry-docked for display at the Field Museum and, after 1920, in Lincoln Park, a reminder of Scandinavia's foundational role in American history.

Norway's Columbian Exhibition exhibits helped articulate for Chicago's residents and visitors a message about Norwegian identity that reinforced craft preservation trends in Norway and in Norwegian America. In 1893, a Museum of Decorative Arts and Design opened in Trondheim, the third such museum to open in Norway (the first had opened in Oslo [Kristiania] in

In 1894, the curator of the Trondheim museum founded the open-air folk museum in Oslo (Kristiania), where city dwellers who had lost touch with the “lesser arts” of Norwegian history and the Norwegian countryside could spend an afternoon, reconnecting with what Munthe and historian Andreas Aubert believed to be their nation’s most distinct cultural heritage. In 1896, Munthe joined the board of the folk museum. In the Norwegian exhibits of the Exposition and at the open air folk museum, urban dwellers came into direct contact with the material culture of rural and peasant Norway, stirring and sharpening their sense of ancestral patriotism as well as the possibilities for a future that took country traditions forward. Preservation of the material craft heritage started early among Norwegian Americans as well. At the first institution of higher education Norwegians founded in America, The Norwegian Luther College, located in Decorah, Iowa, immigrant artifacts began to be collected in a museum in 1877 as the first generation began to pass away and Norwegian Americans began to trade the weavings and carved butter molds brought across the sea in their immigrant chests for new items made in America.

In the late 1890s Ellen Gates Starr spent fifteen months studying the art of bookbinding with William Morris’s friend T.J. Cobden–Sanderson. After her return, and with Starr’s help, in 1900, Addams started the Labor Museum where visitors could observe crafts in practice, and where immigrants with skills in handicrafts were put to work on Saturday nights, modeling the production history of, for example, textiles. Addams understood that transplanted communities carried their labor and design history with them, traditions of values that would be lost in an America that would view them as foreign and antiquated. She realized that although immigrants were now working in sweatshops or factories, or were out of work because of their lack of language skills in English, they had come from pre-industrial backgrounds in Europe, and brought traditional craft skills that would be valued by Americans who had lost them long ago. Marion Foster Washburne, reviewing the Labor Museum for Gustav Stickley’s *Craftsman*, observed that in the Labor Museum one could find a pool of expertise in handicraft:

> [Addams] proposed to set them in an artificially-created industrial environment, which would make plain to themselves, to their children, and to the casual sight-seer, the true importance and dignity of their labor.

Addams’s hope was that craft skills, which immigrants put aside in coming to America, might be brought back as a source of self-esteem in a well-mastered art. These practitioners could take pride in knowing a skill unfamiliar to urban and moneyed Americans. Addams witnessed examples of older generations of immigrants, out of touch with American life, earning the esteem of their children and grandchildren when the crafts they practiced won the admiration of moneyed residents of Chicago.

Though the larger ethnic groups in the Hull House neighborhood were Italians, Irish, Russians, Poles and Bohemians, the neighborhood also included Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians (listed simply as “Scandinavian” on 1895 ethnic neighborhood maps commissioned by Hull House—the heart of the Norwegian area of settlement in the late 1800s being some twenty blocks north). The reviewer for the *Craftsman* observed “beautiful Norwegian embroideries and fringes” in the Labor Museum textiles exhibit. Photos taken in the Labor Museum textile room with its spinning wheels and looms show a rutevev or geometrical Norwegian tapestry displayed on the wall. Norwegian wood was given even more prominence than Norwegian wool. Jessie Luther, who ran the Labor Museum, wrote for the *Commons*: “The museum side, illustrating the wood, is very incomplete, but several antique wooden tankards and Viking bowls of Norwegian workmanship, some of them gaily decorated, are much studied and admired.” What Luther calls “gay decoration” in her review is the traditional Norwegian floral painting technique of rosemaling. Luther also reports that “The classes in sloyd, carpentry and wood-carving are very popular, not only with the girls and boys, but with young men and women as well.” Though the majority of the immigrants who took classes at Hull House were from southern and eastern Europe, one of the prominent craft traditions they studied, such as “sloyd,” the Scandinavian approach to hand woodwork, was Norwegian.

the skilled craftsmen of the old world, who do not need to be taught to do any of these things, but who have been thrown out of their environment and who are too often despised by their own children because they cannot speak good English, or quickly adapt themselves to our alien civilization.

Main Club Room, Chicago Norske Klub

Detail, left wall: The High Seat
But what of Morris’s idea of crafts needing to be “alive amidst the very nature they were wrought into”? Addams took Morris’s preference for vernacular craft tradition seriously enough that she included Navajo weavers in her demonstrations of the history of weaving, and an “Indian Room” of Native American artifacts to model the crafts tradition of the Americas. In this, Addams was not unlike Gustav Stickley, Morris’s main design apostle in America, who also emphasized the appropriateness of Native American elements of design in the Arts and Crafts houses of his followers. While Native American craft was rooted in the place and nature of America, the ethnic groups that filled the neighborhoods around Hull House had their origins elsewhere. Addams was therefore happy when workers used copper, wood, and wool produced in the Upper Midwest even if they were shaped using Old World skills.

Norwegian immigrants articulated for themselves the same feelings of transplanted alienation Jane Addams recognized in other immigrant groups. Guttorm Viker (1874–1947) spoke for most Norwegian Americans of the early generations when he said at the organizational meeting in Chicago of Den Norske Klub [The Norwegian Club] in 1905,

we are not entirely happy and satisfied in our new home. We found that we came to a land whose people, language and customs are foreign to us and will require years to assimilate. Our mother soil still is fresh in our souls, and we eagerly crave an organization in which we can perpetuate and cherish the traditions of our childhood and youth and maintain the cultural standard we brought with us across the ocean.

The “mother soil” of Viker and many Norske Klub members who lived most of their lives in America was Norwegian, not Midwestern. The “cultural standard” Viker and others sought to replicate in America was celebrated at The Norwegian Club (after 1911 Chicago Norske Klub [Chicago Norwegian Club]), not only in social gatherings but also in the arts. First in rented facilities, later in a clubhouse completed in 1917 near Logan Park, The Chicago Norwegian Club housed many of the same types of activities that had been organized at Hull House: lectures (including one by Jane Addams), athletics, a choir, an orchestra, a dramatic society, and annual art exhibitions. The focus on easel painting and sculpture in the annual exhibitions suggests the upward–aspiring nature of the club’s members, but the 1917 clubhouse built by the organization also embodied an Arts and Crafts aesthetic and values rooted in Norwegian history in keeping with the more primitive peasant aesthetic of Gerhard Munthe.

The clubhouse, dedicated on July 4, 1917, was designed by Joachim Giæver and Frederick Dinkelberg. On the exterior from its gable projected the relief dragon heads that provided a shorthand sign of Norwegian heritage. The interior showed the continuing importance of an Arts and Crafts interpretation of Norwegian handcraft tradition. Two of the artists whose work featured heavily in the interior design of the building shifted, as Munthe had, from a naturalistic oil painting style to a flat vernacular folk style as part of the cultural assertion represented by the building.

Ben Blessum (1877–1954), who was born in Romsdal, Norway moved with his parents to Wisconsin and later relocated to Chicago to study at the Art Institute in 1896. Blessum took pride in his roots in rural Norway. He said, after an art study trip to Setesdal, that he found deep pleasure in the folklore: “the people of Setesdal still knew where the elves danced on a summer evening, and the Hulder [troll] cattle licked their salt.” His American political identity and his Norwegian nationalism were complementary. They grew out of his deep appreciation of the qualities he believed to characterize the Norwegian country stock from which he had come: “insistent on the enjoyment of certain personal, property, and political rights originating in that gray dawn when Norsemen ruled Norway.” Blessum pursued a varied career as a commercial artist, journalist, Norwegian railway promoter, lecturer, and fine artist. His oil paintings of Norwegian farmsteads and peasants in their national dress were executed in a naturalistic style. However, when he decorated the walls and wooden booths of the small dining area of the Chicago Norwegian Club he used chevrons and flattened floral motifs that were a modern decorative variation on the flowers...
of peasant rosemaling, reminiscent of Gerhard Munthe's borders, panels, and friezes commissioned for a room at the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts and Design.

The work most evident to visitors at the Chicago Norwegian Club was done by Emil Biorn (1864–1935) in the large dining hall on the first floor. Biorn had been born in Oslo (Kristiania) and studied at the Oslo (Kristiania) Art Institute. He was a commercial illustrator, working on posters and advertisements for the Barnes–Crosby Company, an engraving house. He also did oil paintings of historical events in a simple but naturalistic style, but for the building decorations, Biorn turned to the lesser arts. He designed ceiling lights of wood and amber glass that resemble stave churches: dragon heads projecting from the corners, steep gables projecting up from the center of each side, and a row of cloister arches running across each side. In the center of one long wall of the dining room was a massive brick hearth. Facing it in the center of the other wall was the high seat. This long bench had a high back that extended up the full height of the wall between two massive sculpted wooden ceiling braces. Facing, as it did, the hearth, the imposing high seat gave the long room the look of a medieval Viking banquetting hall.

Biorn's design for the prominent high seat invested it with symbolism. The chair arms at either end of the seat were carved in the form of dragons, echoing the motif of the ceiling fixtures. Also echoing the design of the fixtures, a row of wooden arches along the back of the seat each were inset with painted heraldic emblems of the major cities of Norway. The back of the high seat was framed in wood painted with an elaborate Viking–style geometrical interlace, as found on the page borders of Munthe's Kings' Sagas. The main feature of the back is a large oil–painted canvas with colors, borders, and flat, hard–edged figures that echo the fairytale compositions of Munthe. As Blesssum did with his decoration, Biorn also adopted a decorative art style in keeping with the architectural function of the seat. There are multiple figurative and geometric borders. In each corner a border square carefully mimics rutevev traditional tapestry. The style of the painted canvas employs design traditions that echo back through Munthe and contemporary Norwegian tapestry to medieval Norwegian wood and textile. This was not lost on the high seat's Chicago Norwegian viewers. Finn Wilhelmsen wrote in the Norwegian–language Chicago paper Norden: “Bjorn's [sic] festive mural painting... remind[s] one of Munthe's decorations in Haakons–hallen in Bergen.” The importance of the mural's subject was also immediately apparent to Wilhelmsen: “These murals should be of great interest to all Norwegians in America, as it depicts the history of the first visit of the white men to America.”

The four scenes painted across the back of the high seat depict episodes from the Flatey Book, the largest medieval Icelandic manuscript. In the first scene, Bjarne Herjulfsson reports on lands he had sighted west of Greenland and Iceland. In the second scene, Leif Erikson sails west to explore the new lands. In the third scene, Erikson's German crew member, with his long black hair, returns to their camp in America bearing clusters of grapes from the vines after which Erikson will give the land its name. The fourth panel shows Erikson and his companions kneeling in thanks before a building constructed for their stay in Vinland: a wooden structure with projecting dragon heads at its gable end. Beneath each panel is an excerpt in Old Icelandic from the Flatey Book. Above these separate inscriptions is centered the larger, general one: “Leif nafn landenu ok kallade Vinland” (Leif gave the name to the land and called it Vinland).

Biorn and Blesssum spent their formative years in Norway. They were representative of a large transplanted community in Chicago. In 1910, the last census before the construction of the Chicago Norwegian Club building, there were 24,186 Chicagoans who had been born in Norway, a number close to, but slightly larger than the 23,049 with Norwegian parentage. Many in both generations had a divided sense of loyalty that they longed to fuse. Craft expression helped them accomplish that task. Morris and Munthe perceived that persons in urban environments in an industrial age would feel a sense of alienation that the work of their hands would help overcome, in part because it put people in touch with a pre–industrial age of peasant life and made people mindful of history and traditions that provide both meaning and resonance. Jane ADDAMS put this philosophy in practice among Chicago's immigrant population around the turn of the century. For Chicago's Norwegian colony, informed by the context of the Norwegian Arts and Crafts movement, work in the “lesser arts” evoked practitioners' sense of their long history as free and outward–journeying Norwegians—well made to contribute to the ongoing formation of their new land of America.

David Falder thanks the editors of Norwegian–American Essays volume 14, in which a version of this text first appeared. Falder is a Professor of English at Luther College, Iowa. His research focuses on the Victorian period, especially the work of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement in Europe and America.

1 The The lecture on which a later essay was based was delivered in 1877.
3 Ibid, 22.
5 Ibid, 24.
6 Ibid, 22.
9 Patricia G. Berman, “Norwegian Craft Theory and the National


13 Stankiewicz, “Art at Hull House,” 36.


16 Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, 397.


23 This collection, which eventually grew into Vesterheim Norwegian–American Museum, now includes outdoor exhibits from both Norway and America, and includes as part of its current work, classes that advance the practice of traditional Norwegian crafts. See www.vesterheim.org.

24 Marion Foster Washburne, “A Labor Museum,” *The Craftsman* (September 1904), 573.


31 Though The Chicago Norwegian Club disbanded, selling its clubhouse in 1971, decorative elements of the dismantled interior were donated to Vesterheim Norwegian–American Museum in Decorah, Iowa, where they can still be viewed.


**WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE SPAB: WORK IN GREAT BRITAIN 1877–1900**

*Andrea Elizabeth Donovan*

When William Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877, he sought to preserve the integrity of historic buildings by preventing unnecessary changes and additions. Morris’s organization of the SPAB, his passion for the Society and what it stood for, and his “Manifesto” express his principles towards restoration and preservation and explain his intense desire to effect change in the restoration practices of his time. This article will discuss the Society’s work in Great Britain, and specifically in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin during the late nineteenth century.

Initially, the extremes of the nineteenth century Gothic Revival motivated the founding of the SPAB. Although some restoration had occurred in past centuries, it was in Morris’s age that the practice of altering buildings to appear Gothic in
similar efforts around the world. and largest conservation society in Britain and has inspired historic buildings, along with the evolution of techniques and providing alternate ideas to promote preservation. Due to safeguarding them as much as was possible and practical.

Early SPAB work involved speaking against restoration and providing alternate ideas to promote preservation. Due to the continued monitoring of preservation practices regarding historic buildings, along with the evolution of techniques and adaptations throughout the years, the SPAB is now the oldest and largest conservation society in Britain and has inspired similar efforts around the world.

Definitions: “Restoration,” “Preservation,” and “Conservation”

The words “preservation” and “restoration” have evolved to hold different meanings than in Morris’s day. Further, the word “conservation” is also currently used as a synonym for “preservation,” to denote the use of minimal preservation techniques with only mild repair when necessary. Its use in reference to historic architecture is primarily a modern development. That buildings be preserved was Morris’s goal when he fought against restoration and organized the SPAB since, put simply, he thought that “restoration” constituted destruction.

Ironically, the word “restoration” is now sometimes mistakenly used to refer to current practices of preservation and conservation. However, in the nineteenth century “restoration” referred to the practice of destroying parts of a building or a whole building to rebuild it in accord with an architectural style that was frequently not the original style. This meant that many good structures were altered or destroyed because they were not originally built in the preferred style of the day, the Gothic Revival style. By contrast, “restoration” currently means that a building or an area of a building is changed to resemble its original architectural style, whereas the SPAB favored retaining each stage of its actual history. Even so, today’s “restoration” practices tend to be much more reasonable than in the nineteenth century, as buildings are generally only modified when necessary to maintain the integrity of an area or when a building no longer can be preserved. There are currently also many protection laws for historic buildings and sites, not only in Great Britain but around the world, that prohibit modification unless reviewed by the local historical society.

When William Morris founded the SPAB, he believed that Great Britain’s architectural heritage was threatened by the popularity of restoration trends that included the heavy use of faux medieval designs and the resultant lack of an original contemporary style. He envisioned a specific kind of preservation, one that allowed for the integrity of the past to merge with the present and future in building structures. He believed that there was integrity, a heritage, and a life to old buildings and sites that stretched beyond their construction and shell. It was this essence of workmanship and the connection to a people’s historic and cultural development that could not possibly be duplicated, and what made his contemporaries’ preoccupation with restoration such a farce. At an early SPAB meeting, Morris stated:

We of this Society at least know the beauty of the weathered and time-worn surface of ancient building, and have all of us felt the grief of seeing this surface disappear under the hands of a “restorer;” but though we all feel this deeply enough, some of us perhaps may be puzzled to explain to the outside world the full value of this ancient surface. It is not merely that it is in itself picturesque and beautiful, though that is a great deal; neither is it only that there is a sentiment attaching to the very face which the original builders gave their work, but dimly conscious all the while of the many generations which should gaze on it; it is only a part of its value that the stones are felt to be, as Mr. Ruskin beautifully puts it, speaking of some historic French building, now probably changed into an academic model of its real self, that they are felt to be “the very stone which the eyes of St. Louis saw lifted into their places.” That sentiment is much, but it is not all; nay, it is but a part of the especial value to which I wish to-day to call your attention, which value briefly is, that the untouched surface of ancient architecture bears witness to the development of man’s ideas, to the continuity of history.¹

Morris realized that architecture needed to be adapted at some point: when a wall could no longer be preserved by proper maintenance, then perhaps it would need to be replaced. At that point, however, he believed that the replacement should be constructed by contemporary means in a contemporary style and done so minimally. Restorers of Morris’s time would instead typically knock down the wall and build a new one that they claimed looked “more” like the walls of the original structure’s time than the one they had just destroyed. Then they would often embellish it with gothic styling, possibly not even reminiscent of the actual time of the original structure. Preservation, according to Morris, is the maintenance of an artifact or building in its present, or natural, state. Preservationists realized they could not restore a building to its original condition. This would be like transferring the present to the past. A building that is hundreds of years old cannot have the same dynamic or the same meaning as when first constructed, and they appreciated the fact that buildings evolved as they were added

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to and modified. They wanted to preserve buildings in the state they had naturally arrived at over time by keeping them as untouched as possible and protecting them from further decay.²

The original SPAB “Manifesto,” written by Morris in 1877, refers to restoration as “forgery” and criticizes the “civilized world of the nineteenth century” for “having no style of its own amidst its wide knowledge of the styles of other centuries.”³ Morris criticizes architects for changing the fabric of historic buildings in the name of “restoration,” complaining that they aim to “destroy something [a historic building] and to supply the gap by imagining what the earlier builders should or might have done,” resulting in what Morris refers to as a “feeble and lifeless forgery.”⁴ Morris continues his “Manifesto” by calling upon architects to “put Protection in the place of Restoration, to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof,” pointing out that historic buildings are “monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying.”⁵ Morris concludes that only if the principles of his “Manifesto” are adhered to “can we protect our ancient buildings, and hand them down instructive and venerable to those who come after us.”⁶ Vital to the integrity of the SPAB, both in 1877 and today, this “Manifesto” provides the backbone to the organization.

SPAB ORIGINS

The first incident that incited Morris to action was the onset of alterations at the Burford parish church in Oxfordshire, England. In the summer of 1876, Morris first noticed this church restoration project, and after seeing further
changes to the church that September, he wrote a letter urging the formation of an organization that could prevent what he considered the destruction of ancient architecture. Although the existence of this letter is only mentioned in the notes of May Morris and the letter itself has not survived, it seems likely that her dates are correct given Morris’s interests the following year. The second incident that spurred Morris into action was the planned restoration efforts on the Abbey Church at Tewkesbury. To protest against this restoration he drafted a letter to the Athenaeum on March 5, 1877 to explain the goals of his proposed society.

My eye just now caught the word “restoration” in the morning paper, and, on looking closer, I saw that this time it is nothing less than the Minster of Tewkesbury that is to be destroyed by Sir Gilbert Scott. What I wish for, therefore, is that an association should be set on foot to keep a watch on old monuments, to protest against all “restoration” that means more than keeping out wind and weather, and, by all means, literary and other, to awaken a feeling that our ancient monuments are not mere ecclesiastical toys, but sacred monuments of the nation’s growth and hope. (10 March 1877).8

Later the same month, Morris himself organized a meeting to found the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which was formally constituted as a society on March 22, 1877. Ten persons attended this first meeting, including Philip Webb and George Wardle, two men associated with Morris and Co. with whom Morris conferred regularly. Philip Webb, Morris’s friend from G. E. Street’s architectural firm, was an associate member of the firm, and George Wardle was the firm manager. The participants at this meeting elected William Morris temporary Secretary and Treasurer.9

During this time, when he began to very actively write and lecture in behalf of the SPAB, Morris started a series of lectures with the purpose of bringing his views on art to area workers. In a December 1887 lecture “The Lesser Arts,” Morris further explained his views on restoration:

…these old buildings have been altered and added to century after century, often beautifully, always historically; their very value, a great part of it, lay in that… But of late years a great uprising of ecclesiastical zeal, coinciding with a great increase of study, and consequently of knowledge of medieval architecture, has driven people into spending their money on these buildings, not merely with the purpose of repairing them, of keeping them safe, clean and wind and weather–tight but also of “restoring” them to some ideal state of perfection; sweeping away if possible all signs of what had befallen them.10

One of Morris’s younger colleagues in the SPAB, W.R. Lethaby, later summed up eloquently not only the Society’s views on restoration but also the futility of the restorationists’ aims:

It is impossible to give any notion of the violence and stupidities which were done in the name of “restoration.” The crude idea seems to have been born of the root absurdity that art was shape and not substance; our ancient buildings were appearances of what was called “style.” When the architect had learned what his textbooks taught of the styles he could then provide thirteenth– or fourteenth–century “features’” at pleasure, and even correct the authentic old ones. At Canterbury a wonderful twelfth–century tower was destroyed to put in its place a nineteenth–century “fifteenth–century” erection.11

That Morris wanted to save an ancient heritage speaks truly of his character. His goal was hardly a nationalistic or selfish quest. He wanted to preserve the past for everyone. He felt that little of the past could be found in our everyday existence, and that the greatest keepers of our heritage were the materials of our past existence. These could be found in old books, artifacts, stories, and most concretely, our buildings.

In the nineteenth century, quite often an old building was looked at solely for its practical and monetary benefit. The SPAB realized that it needed to focus primarily on changing the attitude towards historic architecture and educating the public and professionals about preservation and restoration. By the end of the nineteenth century, the terms “restoration” and “preservation” were much more commonly understood, in part due to the vocal advocacy of Morris and other SPAB members.

From 1877 to 1900, the SPAB made great strides. The SPAB’s first meeting had an attendance of ten. By the end of the century, memberships, including those in England and on the continent, numbered 372.12 In 1877, architects and builders barely listened to what the SPAB had to say. Twenty years later, architects and builders were consulting with the SPAB, or they were themselves members of the SPAB.

During the SPAB’s first year, Morris observed that “it is hard to convince people in general that the art in our ancient buildings is a real solid possession.”13 He continued:

What we require is a change of feeling in every locality, in every parish, in every county, for though the Society is strong in its center, in London, it too often meets with such rebuffs as this when it writes to some distant part of England to protest against ill–advised restoration: “Mind your own business, we do not ask you for money, what right do you have to interfere with us?” Now if we could get people in every part of the country when they were asked to subscribe money for restorations to say, “stop, let us see if we cannot preserve the building instead of destroying it,” a great deal of good would result.14

By contrast, in the third year of the SPAB, its annual report
noted:

The work of the past year has differed little from that of the previous one, except in two notable instances, which will be referred to presently. The Committee have, as before, received information, written letters of enquiry, protest, and advice, sometimes with obvious and encouraging results, sometimes with nothing apparent to show for the trouble. The Society is, doubtless, becoming well known, and the Committee believe its principles are taking root, and especially, they think, are influencing the great body of our Architects; a course of events which is both very encouraging and what might have been expected. The Society has by no means lacked the support of the Press during the past year; articles advocating its principles have been not unfrequent, and the columns of all the leading papers have been most generously thrown open to letters and explanations whenever necessary.15

Specific Cases: Westminster Abbey

An important case for the SPAB was the work at Westminster Abbey. The SPAB stayed actively involved in monitoring the architectural condition of the Abbey from 1880 through much of the nineteenth century. Due to the Abbey’s historical significance, location in the heart of London, architectural worth, and popularity, the SPAB continues to monitor its condition to the present.

Edward the Confessor had founded the present Westminster Abbey, officially dedicating it as the Collegiate Church of St. Peter in Westminster in 1065. Henry III rebuilt this Norman style church in the thirteenth century in the Gothic style. After it suffered destruction in a fire in 1298, the architect Henry Yevele rebuilt sections of the abbey in 1388 based on the thirteenth century Gothic plans. Abbot Islip had arranged for the completion of the vaulting of the nave by 1506, and Henry VII for the rebuilding of the chapel. The west front, including the two towers, was the work of Nicholas Hawksmoor in the eighteenth century.16

The alterations at Westminster Abbey provide a good example of the negative impact the controlling ecclesiastical body could have on the SPAB’s ability to prevent restoration. Churches often viewed a piece of architecture or a gravesite as their exclusive property rather than something valuable to the public. The church officials, the Dean of Westminster Abbey, and the Chapter committee members, were at first generally unwilling to listen to the SPAB’s suggestions. A letter from the Dean to the SPAB in 1892 declined to receive “from individuals, however eminent, general advice or directions.”17 In short, according to the report, he felt the “care of the Abbey was the Dean and the Chapter’s business, and nobody else’s.”18

The nineteenth–century Church of England tended to be unsympathetic towards the SPAB and its ideas of preservation. This view was partially exacerbated by the Oxford Movement, which had tried to revitalize the church by reintroducing traditional (that is, Anglo–Catholic) practices, rituals, and doctrines, emphasizing the theological aspect of religion rather than the cultural or aesthetic aspects of its artifacts and buildings. Church officials thought it necessary that the architecture reflect these theological doctrines, whereas to the SPAB, Westminster Abbey and other churches and cathedrals were valuable as historic examples of architecture and therefore, important to all people, regardless of their religion or diocese. An important characteristic of the Gothic style was its religious associations, and for the Dean of Westminster, maintaining Westminster Abbey in a Gothic style was a way to glorify God. Although both perspectives are valid, because nineteenth century restoration was so extreme the SPAB felt that it needed to be more interventionist, and this left less room for compromise as the case at Westminster demonstrates.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Abbey had official church architects: Edward Blore from 1809 to 1849, Sir Gilbert Scott from 1849 to 1878, and John Pearson from 1878 to 1897. These men were all noted Gothic Revival architects and, not surprisingly, Morris found fault with all of them. He called Scott and Pearson’s restoration work “architect’s architecture, the work of the office,”19 and asserted that “a long series of blunders of various kinds, all based on a false estimate of the true value of the building, have damaged the exterior of the Abbey so vitally that scarcely any of its original surface remains.”20

Morris thought that Blore, Scott, and Pearson were absolutely incapable of reconstructing vital parts of the Abbey because they were not part of the intellectual, social, and physical environment of the workers and designers who erected it. Of course, Morris thought this of all restoration architects and insisted that architects needed to build their own structures or repair and preserve old buildings. One especially damaging aspect of the situation at Westminster Abbey, in Morris’s opinion, was that the church was willing to invest a large amount of money into the structure, which allowed for the most drastic and total “restorations.” Morris claimed that the restorations done to the Abbey were “ill–conceived and disastrous pieces of repair of various degrees of stupidity.”21 Here he referred specifically to the work of Blore and Scott when they resurfaced the north aisle of the Abbey, which destroyed the detailed work of twelfth and thirteenth century artisans.22

The first evidence of SPAB attention to Westminster Abbey, in 1880, concerned the proposed restoration of the north transept porches. They especially opposed this restoration since the south transept had already been restored in the Gothic style. Newman Marks, the SPAB secretary in 1880, wrote to the Dean and Chapter of the Abbey when the SPAB noticed that the central doorway of the north transept front was undergoing alterations. In this letter, he claimed that the alterations were not only unnecessary but that they do “not seem to be
intended to reproduce the design as it appeared during any period of existence.” An answer came from the son of Sir Gilbert Scott, John Oldrid Scott, who was overseeing the projects begun by his father before his death in 1878. Scott asserted that the changes were necessary to improve the appearance of the Abbey. Further, he also felt the designs were accurate historical representations because his father had researched the Abbey’s history carefully. Assuming that Sir Gilbert Scott’s plans were accurate, the Dean and the Chapter of Westminster allowed them to continue. When John Pearson, the next official architect, took charge of the project and continued the execution of Scott’s plans, the Westminster clergy heeded the SPAB’s opinion no more than they had in the past, and the SPAB’s annual report for 1888 regretfully admitted that this section of the Abbey is “too jealously guarded from public view for anything to be said about it now.”

The SPAB next took an interest in the rose window located in the restored front of the north transept porches. The painted glass window in question was erected in 1722. According to the SPAB, the window contained an exceptionally fine example of English glass painting that should not be lost. The official architect at the time, John Pearson, wanted to put in a completely new window to match the new north transept front. In 1888, the SPAB reported that a “promise has been given that the curious early eighteenth-century rose window, with its glass, shall be preserved.” Yet, according to the 1890 SPAB report, this promise seems to have been unkept:

The old glass has been cut up and mangled after a most strange and barbarous fashion. Except a little piece in the middle, none of it occupies the place it did before, and the figures of our Lord and the Apostles have positively been cut off short at the knees to make them fit Mr. Pearson’s new tracery lights.

Although the SPAB had briefly hoped that it had improved the outcome of the tracery window, it was again unsuccessful in this case.

Another SPAB attempt to protect Westminster Abbey concerned Ashburnham House. The structure was located past the cloisters next to the Abbey garden and had originally served as the prior’s apartments in the eleventh century. In 1542, it became the residence for the Dean of Westminster. From 1712 to 1731, the house served as a library until a fire left it vacant. In the 1830’s, the Canon and Sub-Dean Lord John Thynne provided the funding to restore the destroyed section of the house. Thynne lived in the house until his death in 1881, and until this date, the house remained part of Abbey property and under control of the Dean and Chapter. Due to provisions made in the Public Schools Act of 1868, Ashburnham House was to be transferred to Westminster School upon Thynne’s death, which would change the classification of the house from being property of a “public historic monument” to the less protected classification of “public property.” The Abbey officials did not want to surrender the house, particularly when the school suggested that it be demolished to make room for additional classrooms.

At this point, the SPAB formally objected to this transfer of ownership to Westminster School while making public its view that any alterations made to either the exterior or the interior of the house were unacceptable in its eyes. However, little could be done to challenge the Act, and to the dismay of the Abbey officials and the SPAB, the house became school property in May of 1881. Although the school ultimately decided not to destroy the house, extensive restoration was underway by 1882. The 1882 annual report of the SPAB read that the “house is in possession of the school, and a good deal of interesting fifteenth and sixteenth century work at the western part of the house has been destroyed.” Again, the SPAB was unsuccessful in influencing any decisions in this case:

The school authorities have gone on with their work of destruction amongst such of the Abbey buildings as are in their hands. This year they have destroyed the indications of the eleventh-century entrances to the dormitory from below, and have "restored" part of the dormitory itself (now the schoolroom) and of the basement below it into sham Norman. Each holiday time they set to work, and the most important remains of the old Abbey within their power are already destroyed.

The SPAB next tried to prevent the restoration of the tombs and monuments already existing inside Westminster Abbey, while asking that no additional memorials be constructed. Opponents of the SPAB argued in this case that burials had gone on at the Abbey for so long that the SPAB was interfering with history and tradition. The two viewpoints were difficult to negotiate since the SPAB perspective was rooted in emulating
the past while their opponents’ view was geared towards alleged benefits for the future. The results were mixed and in the end neither side was satisfied: while some memorials were restored, many were left alone, and while additional memorials were added, no new construction of memorial space was initiated.

The first discussion of the monuments in the SPAB record appeared in the annual report of 1889. This mentioned the public concern that the Abbey was running out of designated burial spaces and that new burials might negatively affect the interior of the Abbey. The SPAB recorded that it opposed any of the proposed additions or alterations that would allow for more burials. This was a difficult stance to take, however, since there was a long tradition of burying honored individuals in the Abbey, and in arguing to stop this tradition, the SPAB and the Abbey officials risked alienating a great number of public supporters.

In April of 1890, the English government nominated a Royal Commission to determine the capability of Westminster Abbey to continue with burials on the site and to consider plans for providing additional space within the Abbey grounds. The SPAB attempted to have a member appointed to this commission. SPAB committee member Rt. Hon. G. Cavendish Bentinck, M.P. addressed Parliament, requesting that an architect who was not a member of the Royal Academy of Arts be allowed to serve on the committee. The response was that the Government was “not prepared to act on the suggestions of my right Hon. Friend, as they are satisfied that the Royal Commission, as at present constituted, is perfectly competent to advise on the delicate and difficult questions submitted to them.”

In the end, the final report of the Commission eventually worked to the benefit of the SPAB. The report, given in July of 1891, included a history of burials and a listing of possible suggestions to increase tomb and memorial space. A final decision was deferred, however, because according to the report of the Royal Commission, there were between ninety and ninety-four burial spots still available in 1891. Even if burials continued at the same rate as the previous two centuries, there was enough room for at least another century. This outcome satisfied the SPAB until the church officials and segments of the public continued to discuss options. In response, the SPAB published Morris’s report on Westminster Abbey in 1893. Morris argued that no more alterations should be made to memorials at the Abbey:

The burden of their ugliness must be endured, at any rate until the folly of restoration has died out. For the greater part of them have been built into the fabric, and their removal would leave gaps, not so unsightly indeed as these stupid masses of marble, but tempting to the restorer, who would not be contented with merely patching them decently, but would make them excuses for further introduction of modern work.

The maintenance and restoration of the tombs and monuments in the Abbey also caused controversy. Plans for restoring some of these memorials began in 1895. The SPAB, while claiming that many memorials were inferior in artistic quality, maintained that they still held historical value. Morris sent a letter to The Times concerning the care of the monuments in 1895:

I fear there are those who wish to change the present appearance of the monuments, who believe that it is possible to bring them back to their original splendour. …the “restorers” would try their experiments on the very historical records and works of art themselves: which means, in plain words, that before ‘restoring’ them they would have to destroy them. The record of our remembered history embodied in them would be gone; almost more serious still, the unremembered history, wrought into them by the hands of the craftsmen of bygone times, would be gone also. And to what purpose? To foist a patch of bright, new work, a futile academic study at best.

As in the past, the objections of the SPAB had little influence on church officials. These officials had to consider many factors relating to the Abbey’s structure: finances and repair costs, the interests of individuals with controlling political and financial influence, the impression of the public, and the word of whichever architect had been named as the “expert” on Abbey repairs. For some years these factors were typically more pressing than the interests, however vocal, of the SPAB.

Nonetheless, only two years later, in 1897, John Thomas Micklethwaite was named the official Abbey architect. Micklethwaite was a supporter of preservation over restoration and of many SPAB ideals. The Dean and Chapter had a variety of good reasons to name him: he had worked with Scott from 1862 to 1869, his work was recognized for accuracy and qual-
ity, his emphasis on maintenance over restoration was actually cost effective, the demand for Gothic restoration had abated somewhat, and the SPAB and other preservation and historical groups supported him.41 Micklethwaite helped the SPAB reach some of their aims at the Abbey and at other sites, such as Kirkstall Abbey. He also helped with more wide-reaching goals by promoting preservation. The quality of his preservation work allowed the Abbey officials, the officials of other sites, other architects, and the public to see the validity of the SPAB’s opinions.

Micklethwaite had begun his architectural work with Scott in 1862 and co-founded an architectural firm with Somers Clarke in 1869. He was responsible for many projects, including St. Matthias church at Cambridge, St. George at Oxford, and St. Mary Magdalene in London. His historic preservation work with Kirkstall Abbey and Clifford’s Tower in York are excellent embodiments of the SPAB’s vision. He was also a committee member of the Antiquaries Society, a master of the Art Worker’s Guild, and guest speaker at the 1892 SPAB meeting. He worked at Westminster Abbey from 1897 until his death in 1906.42

The SPAB also achieved success with the cloisters, one of the oldest sections of the Abbey. The cloisters were in danger of being structurally altered during the Ashburnham House case but these alterations never materialized. A more serious threat occurred when the Abbey officials wished to secure additional room for monuments and burials. They considered three suggestions; one, that bodies be interred within the cloister walls; two, that a large glass roof be installed over the open center of the cloisters to allow for burials in the center; and, three, that a monument chapel be erected at the old Refectory site at the south side of the cloisters.43 The 1889 SPAB annual report comments on these suggestions:

How can what still remains to us of the Church and its surroundings be saved from the restorer, and any fresh locust plague of monuments? How little this point is held in view may be known by the almost tragic folly of an utterance that the great cloisters (which at present have comparatively escaped the greedy eye of the monument sticker) should, when the church itself is choke-full of dull monumental jests, itself be sacrificed; as if the beauty of the vaulted cloister would equally well lend itself to refined cruelty of treatment.44

In the end, none of the suggestions was carried out and the cloisters remained intact throughout the nineteenth century. Attempts to preserve the cloisters began in 1905 with a lime wash under Micklethwaite’s surveyorship.45

Because of Micklethwaite, the techniques of preservation became the preferred standard at Westminster Abbey from 1897 onward. By this time, the exterior of the Abbey had been nearly completely “restored,” but the interior was primarily...
The juxtaposition of 17th through 19th century structures with the times. Now, London has a mixture of the old and the new. Outcomes and in the attitude of the community.

As is the case with most SPAB projects, there were a number of unique considerations in dealing with Edinburgh Castle. First, the castle received a great deal of public attention since it was centrally located in the center of a large, prosperous city and a popular and symbolic site for the people of Edinburgh. Second, although the castle had been restored over the centuries, these changes were not compatible with the Gothic style, making it less susceptible to nineteenth century Gothic restorers. Third, the castle was not a church-owned property. Properties owned by the church typically caused more difficulties for the SPAB, since the opinions and needs of church officials and parishioners made it more challenging to keep structures preserved accurately.

The Crown's supervision of Edinburgh Castle made it easier for the SPAB to influence architectural maintenance. Castle officials, headed by a Crown-appointed Governor, ultimately decided on any changes on castle grounds. The castle's primary function, by the late nineteenth century, was to house a militia and Crown officials, who were more interested in the structural integrity of the castle than in its aesthetic qualities. Finally, the architects assigned to the castle work from 1883 to 1891 were not given a free hand to change whatever they wished but were instead hired for specific repair jobs because this was more cost effective. After being hired, the architects would then have to petition for funds and have any alterations approved by the castle officials. This was extremely helpful to the SPAB because some of the worst examples of blatant restoration work could be found in situations where the architect had few restrictions and thought of a building as a personal canvas. Further, the castle architects after 1883, William Nelson and Hippolyte Blanc, were willing to work with the SPAB.

When the architect petitioned the castle officials for funding, these officials put a check on the amount and expense of any proposed alterations, and it was generally more expensive to fund restoration work than preservation work. It was also more expensive to add Gothic Revival features than to fund the more practical repair work that the castle needed. Until work was completed in 1891, the SPAB and both of the castle architects corresponded with the Scottish archaeologist Sir Daniel Wilson and members of the Edinburgh Architectural Association to be sure that their changes were as historically and structurally authentic as possible.

The first written evidence of the SPAB's involvement with Edinburgh Castle is recorded in the 1883 SPAB annual report, which only noted that the castle would probably undergo restoration work. In February of 1884, the SPAB inquired about details of the proposed restoration project for Parliament Hall, a building within the castle walls. Mr. Eustace Balfour, offering preservation advice as well as suggestions to check with the Edinburgh Architectural Association, drafted a letter on February 24, 1884. At this point, the need for archaeological research and the necessity of securing funds delayed any further action regarding Parliament Hall.

The next correspondence occurred in the summer and fall...
of 1885 and concerned St. Margaret’s Chapel. William Nelson, the architect assigned to Edinburgh Castle, wrote to the SPAB, diplomatically describing his intentions for the chapel:

The great interest which attaches to the ancient chapel of St. Margaret in Edinburgh Castle induces me to offer to undertake the cost of certain restorations which competent archaeological authorities recommend for restoring it externally to the condition which may be assumed to have originally characterized it.51

Nelson added that he enlisted the help of the noted archaeologist, Sir Daniel Wilson, to insure that the restoration work was architecturally accurate.52 Nelson tried to work with the SPAB and avoid any future complications by offering to contribute his own funds for the restoration and by consulting outside professional expertise. Concerned about Nelson’s suggestions, the SPAB assigned committee member J.J. Stevenson to take up correspondence with Nelson. Stevenson wrote to Nelson explaining that the “restoration” that he referred to “involves the risk of falsifying history by adding to the chapel features which may not properly belong to it.”53 Stevenson suggested that discussion continue on the fate of St. Margaret’s Chapel and that Nelson find time to meet with him since he would soon be in Scotland.54 In reply, Nelson agreed that, although the restoration plans had already been approved by the Commissioner of Works, he would continue discussion with the SPAB concerning St. Margaret’s.55

Parliament Hall also received attention in 1885 from the SPAB and Nelson. Nelson offered to defray the cost of restoration at Parliament Hall as he did at St. Margaret’s Chapel. He felt that the need for restoration at the Hall was greater than that at St. Margaret’s Chapel and decided to begin there first.56 When Nelson became ill that same year, architect Hippolyte Blanc offered to assist him with the proposed projects and took over preparation of the plans at both St. Margaret’s Chapel and Parliament Hall.

In this instance, even an ardent supporter of preservation would have been likely to support some repair work at Parliament Hall. Turned into a hospital barracks in the seventeenth century, its filthy and dangerous condition could not be remedied with regular preservation techniques. The original ceiling and walls were covered with peeling plaster and hospital beds had been installed. Further, seventeenth century drainage pipes for sewage created an unpleasant health hazard.57 Due to the deficient state of Parliament Hall, Blanc carried out his alteration plans in a manner supported by the SPAB. The Times reported the alteration work of Parliament Hall upon its completion in 1891:
Mr. Blanc has rediscovered its original features, where they survived, and has ornamented the edifice. Restorations, as a rule, are a sorry business. They destroy what was old, and replace it with what is new and garish. Mr. Blanc has destroyed literally nothing of any historical interest or artistic merit; has reopened passages, stairs, and chimneys which had been bricked up, has displayed the fine old roof, which was hidden by a modern ceiling, and, in his paneling and decoration, has shown erudition and a good and quiet taste.  

Next, Blanc dealt with the proposed restoration of St. Margaret’s Chapel. Since the chapel was the oldest existing building at the Castle site and since there was no regular public use of the chapel, the SPAB had suggested to Nelson in 1885 that no alterations be carried out. Although it was Nelson’s intent to restore the chapel, he died in 1887 before any restoration work could be done. Blanc, left in charge of Nelson’s plans, did not chose to do the restoration work, but instead applied preservation and maintenance techniques by keeping the interior and exterior clear of dirt, vines, and mold. The Times reported on the condition of St. Margaret’s Chapel positively in 1891:

Perhaps the most interesting thing in Edinburgh Castle, to some visitors, is simply the black crest of basalt which crops up on the highest eminence, beside the defaced and formless chapel of St. Margaret. …the chapel is really more historical in its present curious and shapeless condition.

The SPAB worked on Edinburgh Castle for nine years. During this period, several goals were accomplished. SPAB involvement ensured the integrity of St. Margaret’s Chapel, the oldest structure on the site. This was the Society’s most gratifying success, as this type of preservation is considered to be the very best recourse. SPAB involvement also helped ensure accurate restoration in the case of Parliament Hall and the proper maintenance of additional castle buildings to prevent the need to restore any other sections in the future. To this day, the historical integrity of St. Margaret’s Chapel remains secure and this fact is emphasized to visitors to Edinburgh Castle as comprising a significant example of architectural history.

The participation of Hippolyte Blanc helped to make the castle campaign a success. Blanc joined the SPAB in 1885 and the same year became the local correspondent in Edinburgh. He continued as its correspondent until 1897, recruiting a number of SPAB supporters in Edinburgh. Blanc’s support of historic preservation and architectural knowledge, mixed with his and Nelson’s willingness to correspond with the London SPAB members, helped to secure the positive outcome of the Edinburgh Castle case.

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**The SPAB in Ireland**

Ireland was less of a focus at the end of the 19th century so the archives contain fewer examples. Activity was greatest in the region of Dublin, the home of St. Patrick’s Cathedral and St. Luke’s Church. Glendalough, outside of Dublin, is also an important site to consider as it has undergone very little restoration.

The architectural style of St. Patrick’s Cathedral is early English Gothic, a late medieval style which included vaulted ceilings, pointed arches, flying buttresses, and large glass windows. Initially built outside of Dublin’s city walls, this cathedral site had a long history, dating back to 390 C.E. However, the present cathedral was built in 1191 and elevated from a parish church to a cathedral. St. Patrick’s Cathedral continued as a central edifice in Dublin, and was restored or added to throughout history, including an addition to the Lady Chapel in 1270; the tower that was originally built in the 14th century was also destroyed twice, first by a storm and second by fire.

By the 1860’s, the cathedral was in much need of repair and was extensively restored by Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness. Guinness was a member of St. Patrick’s congregation and the heir to the Guinness brewery fortune. His restoration was controversial as he wanted to enact his ideas of restoration without any interference, and decided that an open plan and an extended ceiling would be best. Although objections were raised to these changes, because he was paying for them and the cathedral needed to be attended to, these restorations went forward. By 1865, the cathedral was reopened and it exists to this day mostly as it was in 1865. However, the restoration did cause problems with the organ, which was removed during the Guinness restoration. Currently, the organ in use is from the early 20th century.

This major restoration had occurred prior to the SPAB’s founding, but the SPAB was interested in other aspects of the site. On March 20, 1896, Thackeray Turner wrote to the Dean of St. Patrick’s Cathedral with a concern about a proposal to “sell or destroy the ancient peal of bells.” When these bells were not destroyed or sold, Turner responded gratefully, “The Committee of this Society desires me to express to you its sincere thanks for your letter which contains the good news that the 17th century bells are not to be melted down.”

St. Luke’s Church (Church of Ireland) was another Dublin building that caught the SPAB’s attention in the late 19th century. William Stirling visited Dublin in 1884 to obtain information on any “medieval buildings in Dublin which are in danger of destruction,” including St. Luke’s. An article from The Daily Express from Monday, November 17, 1884 notes, on information from William Stirling of the SPAB, that “the interior is lightsome and airy, and a moderate amount of colored decoration has served to complete an attractive auditorium.”

Another relevant site near Dublin was Glendalough (“Gleann dá loch,” a quaint area with a valley between two lakes). The settlement was founded by St. Kevin in the 6th
century, at a time of the blending of old Celtic traditions and Christianity. Glendalough has maintained most of its historic significance as it has not been largely restored, despite some preservation in the 1870’s. The churchyard and round tower survives from the 14th century or earlier. This site was not a focus of anxiety for the SPAB as Glendalough was being maintained in the manner William Morris and the SPAB preferred. The round tower and the graveyard still provide a delightful witness to history, monuments, and the integrity of ruins.

**Burial Sites:**

A good example of the SPAB’s desire to keep the integrity of the past alive takes us back to London. Their attempt to preserve Old St. Pancras churchyard in London was not successful, but it raises important issues concerning Parliamentary regulation of London city churches. Originally St. Pancras Church on Pancras Road, it was referred to as Old St. Pancras after the 1822 erection of St. Pancras New Church on Euston Road. An exterior plaque proclaims that the St. Pancras Old Church is “the most ancient building in the borough. Parts of the present building belong to the XI century and contain Roman tiles. When the church was enlarged in 1847–48 the Altar Stone was discovered...It dates from the early VIIth century and was probably used by St. Augustine.” Its churchyard was one of many crowded early London churchyards to be closed to further burials; eighty churchyards in greater London had been closed by 1855. As early as 1789 the sexton of Old St. Pancras claimed that there was no more room to bury the dead, and by 1853, the government ordered the St. Pancras Vestry not to bury any more bodies in its churchyard.

Despite the historic significance of the church and churchyard, in 1874 the St. Pancras Train Station owners and Midland Railway investors sought the demolition of both since they were situated in an area deemed important for rail construction. Fortunately, the government refused to permit the church’s destruction, and in 1876, the Fields Burial Ground Act created a statutory trust at St. Pancras churchyard. However, the owners of the Midland Railway had to bridge over Regent’s Canal, making it necessary, according to the engineer’s design, to level a significant portion of the burial ground at Old St. Pancras churchyard, so the Government allowed “limited” destruction of the churchyard. While this case provided an example of the limits of Parliament’s commitment to protectionist efforts, it helped urge societies like the SPAB to persist for more effective reform concerning historic sites. The Disused Burial Grounds Act, passed in Parliament in 1884 and backed by the SPAB, prevented any further development on cemeteries and churchyards.

**Other Successes**

The SPAB was involved in a wide variety of cases throughout the nineteenth century, and many of these cases were considered successful. Often it took nothing more than the SPAB’s correspondence to divert intended “restoration.” This was particularly the case when the SPAB interceded early enough in the process. “Restoration” seemed more probable when the progression of the project was well underway, especially if an architect had already been working on the specific site. As the SPAB grew in numbers and influence, they were more likely to discover intended restorations early enough and to make an impression upon those who controlled the site. Further, smaller and less financially secure sites tended to prefer preservation methods instead of restoration because they were more cost-effective.

Increasingly building owners contacted the SPAB for advice. At Studland Church in Dorsetshire, for example, the Vicar wrote to the SPAB for suggestions. The Committee “sent down a member to view the building and report upon it; it turned out to be a most interesting, though small Church, of Norman style, with a groined chancel, and was, in some respects, in a dangerous condition.” While this case provided an example of the SPAB’s effectiveness in protecting historical sites, it also highlighted the need for continued support from the public and the government. The SPAB then wrote a detailed report for the Vicar, suggesting how to proceed with preservation methods and small repairs to save the church from decay while also keeping it from restoration, at a fraction of the cost. According to the SPAB, the church was “saved by the good sense of the Vicar and Churchwarden, aided by the work of the Committee.”

Another example of SPAB action can be found in reference to the Norwich old cathedral gateway, referred to as Water-Gate, which was in danger of being destroyed for a railway...
extension. When the builders filed a request through the House of Commons, the SPAB worked with the Dean and Chapter of Norwich and the Society of Antiquaries to protest “this piece of vandalism.”80 The SPAB wrote to members of the House of Commons to protest the proposed construction. The proposal did not go through and Water–Gate was saved. The Dean of Norwich wrote to the SPAB to thank them:

In the name of my colleagues and myself, I beg to thank your Society most cordially for the very efficient aid given us by them in resisting the proposed intrusion of a railway into our Cathedral Close, and to assure them that we consider the result (which was, in fact, the elimination of the objectionable clause in the Bill as the condition of its being read a second time) to be entirely satisfactory, not only in regard to our own Close, but also, we rejoice to think, in regard to all spots similarly circumstanced.81

In 1871, in order to save the stone circle at Avebury, M. P. John Lubbock had purchased the property, which brought attention to the need of caring for historical monuments.82 An English banker, statesman, scientist, and one of the founding members of the SPAB, Lubbock had in 1873 introduced a bill to prevent the destruction of ancient monuments, but it did not include historic buildings.83 Eventually a watered down version, the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, was passed in 1882, making it possible for the Government to purchase and care for historic monuments with the owner’s agreement, a power that was extended to County Councils in 1900.84 In 1890, Sir Thomas Deane, an Irish architect and a leader in Gothic Revival building and preservation in Ireland, wrote to the SPAB with a concern that the Act did not include medieval buildings and ruins.85 A committee, made up of Governmental officials, architects, and members of the SPAB then submitted a proposed revision of the Act to the House of Commons in 1892.86 An important section of this Bill is as follows:

Where the Commissioners of Works are of opinion that the preservation of any ancient or mediaeval structure, erection, or monument, or any remains thereof is a matter of public interest by reason of the historic, traditional, or artistic interest attaching thereto, they may, at the request of the owner, consent to become the guardians thereof, and thereupon the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, 1882, shall apply to such structure, erection, or monument, or remains, as if the same were an ancient monument to which that Act applies, as defined in that Act.87

With the support of the SPAB and the Society of Antiquaries, John Lubbock introduced the revised Bill,88 and it passed in 1892.89 Still, it was not until the 1913 Act of Compulsion that parliamentary legislation fully controlled the treatment of old buildings because private property rights were no longer given preference.90 Revisions to the Ancient Monuments Protection Act occurred in 1910 and 1931, and the current Act adequately protects ancient monuments, buildings, and sites by giving owners financial assistance and advice while keeping these structures and areas safe from development and other sorts of interference.91 The Act was revised once more in 1953 to further protect buildings by including churches in use.92

The SPAB also promoted a register to list relevant and particularly interesting buildings in London. The SPAB worked with the London County Council and representatives of a variety of London societies to prepare a listing of historically important buildings in greater London. This idea was introduced when it was decided at an 1897 conference that, “Londoners are by no means well–informed as to the architectural treasures they possess, and often it is only realized that a building is of value, when that building is in danger of being removed.”93 In the opinion of many of the conference participants, a list would “remove in a great measure the risk of losing such buildings.”94 Through the Committee for the Survey of the Memorials of Greater London, a resolution suggested the preparation and publication of a detailed register of “buildings of historical or architectural interest in London,” complete with illustrations and drawings. Those who spoke to the London County Council in support included Sir Robert Hunter, chairman of the National Trust, Philip Norman, representing the Society of Antiquaries, and Thackeray Turner, representing the SPAB. Support also came from SPAB members C.R. Ashbee and Sir John Lubbock. The London County Council was agreeable to the proposition and voted to commit £100 to support the printing of the initial sections of the register.95

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Unrestored chapel in the Glendalough cemetery. Photo: A. E. Donovan
During the first decades of its existence, the SPAB did much to prevent restoration and to promote preservation in buildings and monuments around Great Britain, maintaining independent branches in England, Scotland and Ireland. The SPAB so influenced late nineteenth century perspectives of historic preservation that it inspired the foundation of similar societies in Britain, America, Europe, and around the world. The next preservation organization to form after the SPAB, for example, was the English National Trust in 1896, an organization that applied the SPAB's "approach to conservative repair."

Initially in the late nineteenth century, work was centered on architecture but has grown to include monuments, bridges, windmills, and any structure of historic relevance.

That Morris was able to influence the people of his time is admirable. Even more, that the SPAB not only influenced the generations beyond Morris's own but also continues to be an active and formidable organization over a century after its formation testifies to Morris's forethought. The success of the SPAB immortalizes Morris's commitment to the preservation of architectural integrity and to the preservation of a national and cultural heritage.

Throughout its history, the SPAB has maintained these ideals. One has only to view the SPAB website, read the current SPAB newsletter, attend a meeting, or observe the nature of current SPAB work to see not only the credit which has been given to Morris and his original ideals, but also how these ideals continue to guide the SPAB in its current work.

The SPAB is still an active force for preservation, learning, and promoting the initial goals of William Morris's dream of keeping the history of the past and preserving it for future generations.

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35. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3rd. ser., vol. 344 (1890), col. 459. Response was given by W.H. Smith, M.P.
36. Ibid.
38. Morris, Concerning Westminster Abbey, 11.
41. William R. Lethaby, Westminster Abbey Re–Examined (New York: Benjamin Blum, 1972), 297. Lethaby was also a member of the SPAB.
43. Ibid., 268–269, 280–283. Contains a list of governors dating from 1107.
44. SPAB File for Edinburgh Castle (London: SPAB). This file contains numerous letters between the SPAB and both William Nelson and Hippolyte Blanc.
47. William R. Lethaby, Westminster Abbey Re–Examined (New York: Benjamin Blum, 1972), 297. Lethaby was also a member of the SPAB.
49. Ibid., 268–269, 280–283. Contains a list of governors dating from 1107.
50. SPAB File for Edinburgh Castle (London: SPAB). This file contains numerous letters between the SPAB and both William Nelson and Hippolyte Blanc.
54. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
58. The Times (London), 21 February 1891, 3. Editor’s comment.
59. Ibid., 3–4. Editor’s comment.
60. SPAB archive, London. The annual reports list member and correspondent names; Hippolyte Blanc’s name appears from 1885 to 1897.
61. SPAB in Scotland, The Glasite Meeting House, 33 Barony Street, Edinburgh, EH3 6NX.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
72. From a historic plaque placed at the entrance of Old St. Pancras. I photographed this during one of four visits to the site.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid., 10–11, 23 May 1882 letter, E.M. Goulburn, Dean of Norwich.
84. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., 36. As is typical of most National Trust activity in England and in the United States, the owner of a historic site surrenders unconditional rights to that site in exchange for the monetary and security benefits of that site being declared protected.
94. Ibid.
96. Ibid. From the Bulletin that advertises the accomplishments of the SPAB over the century:The SPAB Website (http://www.spab.org.uk/) begins with a reprint of the original Morris SPAB “Manifesto”. The SPAB News is a quarterly publication that outlines current SPAB projects and advertises educational programs. The SPAB Board holds monthly meetings to discuss financing of specific sites, to develop educational programs, and to determine future goals.
97. The SPAB chapters in each country can be found as follows: England: info@spab.org.uk, Scotland: scotland@spab.org.uk, and Ireland: spabireland@gmail.com.
Morris’s *News from Nowhere* was written for all potential readers, of course, but it was also designed for his very specific *Commonweal* audience of January–October 1890. Members of the Socialist League, and more particularly those in London, would have felt satisfaction at the familiarity of its many immediate references. They would have recognized the 53-year-old self-deprecating Guest as their prominent member William, and taken pleasure in the thought that their gatherings in the Morris family coach house might be memorialized by future post-revolutionaries. They would likely have followed with interest the Nowhereans’ journey through the Hammersmith market, past Kensington Gardens, through Piccadilly and to the British Museum, Camden Town, and onwards. Guest’s passage through Trafalgar Square would have prompted readers to reflect on the police violence they had witnessed and the need for continued solidarity in the face of repression. Some would have been familiar with the buildings of Eton and Oxford which the travelers pass on their route upriver, and others may have visited the Morris country home at Kelmscott Manor, or found resemblances between Morris’s wife Jane and daughter May and the Guest House’s Annie and the young socialist Ellen. More educated or sophisticated readers would have responded to references to the Ponte Vecchio or the Baptistry of Florence. And all would have grasped Morris’s basic point—that the “nowhere” of the future must be shaped in the here and now.

Not so, alas, for American students; 1890s Britain is 130 years into the past, few have traveled to London or throughout Britain, and even those who have done so lack the comfortable familiarity of Morris’s readers, for whom London was home. They will likely know little of nineteenth-century socialism or its antecedents, and even less of the specific persons and events to which Morris makes reference—W. E. Gladstone, Charles Fourier, Henry Stanley, Bloody Sunday—or be acquainted with nineteenth century debates on women’s equality, environmental preservation, or communal living.
To help enable students to “see it,” as Morris envisioned, with the Digital Studio at the University of Iowa and other collaborators I have prepared a digital map based on the census of 1890 in the program Storymaps (arcgis), now housed at http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/news.html. As one enters each numbered chapter of this site, on the right hand map green tabs indicate the path traversed by the travelers as well as nearby places to which they refer. On the left side appear notes and images, and below these, the chapter text, so that viewers can absorb both apparatus and text without leaving the site. The notes provide historical background—for example, regarding the location of the Socialist League offices mentioned in chapter 1, the previous condition of the slum areas cleared by the Great Change in chapter 10, or the references to General Gordon and Stanley in chapter 15. These are supplemented by photographs or artists’ images of the places seen along the journey, such as the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, or Trafalgar Square as they appeared in the 1890s. In preparing annotations I have been aided by Clive Wilmer’s 1993 Penguin edition of News from Nowhere and a critical and annotated edition in a 1971 Ph. D. dissertation by Michael Libermann, which provides detailed information on places and events as well as noting the changes and additions between the Commonweal version of 1890 and first published edition of 1891.

I hope that others will use this digital version of News, and that users will send me additional suggestions and photographs for inclusion. Perhaps with advancing technology this version could be improved—ideally, for example, as readers move their cursor through the text they would be able to trace the Nowhereans’ journey in a solid red line on the map. In the meantime, however, I hope that the notes and images of this experimental version will help both “digital natives” and others enjoy and appreciate the spatial qualities of Morris’s utopian text.

Florence Boos is the general editor of the William Morris Archive and can be reached at florence-boos@iowa.edu.
Straight up in the air, seeing what needed to be seen,
Before letting it fall back to the ground again.
Thus the day offered instances of calm and causes for alarm,
Creeping up steep grades behind the tired trucks
Or hurtling down hillsides towards the sun upon the sea,
But sometimes on sweet, unexpected occasions
These brief but durable passages of peace,
A welcoming way among the roads that bring one home.

Earlier today I drove round that selfsame Viðidalstunga
From two directions, seeing in the distance the wooden church
That replaced the turf one a few decades later,
Then went on to find a turf church farther down the road
And photographed it with my phone.
I was alone there in the twilight
Late in the month of May,
The light slowly fading on the church’s green door.

I had spent the day driving around fjords and mountains
On roads made of gravel mined from volcanic rock,
Roads that dropped off on the seaward side or shot Down at ridiculous speeds towards the open water
Before curving to the left or the right at the last instant.
I had only myself and my inner rants to distract me,
Rehearsing old times I hoped to have handled better.

As the sun slipped down to the level of my windshield
I came back through the mountains that separate
One side of the Skagi peninsula from the other.
The road was well paved and roomy
Even when twin semis came toward me from the opposite direction.
The valleys spread evenly away on both sides of the road
And the hills rose up gently with patches of earth
In different colors alternating with patches of grass.

There were no farms, or almost no farms,
No sheep, no terns sitting in the road and flying off
With palpable irritation, and the light mainly gentle
With the sun setting just beyond the mountains.
No ducks or greedy little shore birds,
Just a swan or two, lying alongside a river,
The female gravid and serene, awaiting her time,
The male with its long white neck stuck

FJORDS AND MOUNTAINS
Paul Acker

In 1871, William Morris rode his horse to Viðidalstunga,
Stopped at the tiny turf church beside the farm and located
A variety of objects of interest, many of which
Survive today in the museums of modern Iceland.
He also held a handwritten book of the Saga
Of Sigurd and Fafnir, the hero who slayed a dragon
That started out life as a dwarf but, well,
Got bigger. And meaner and more greedy.

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Historic drawing of Glaumbaer Farm, Iceland
Viðimýrarkirkja, Photo: Regína Hrönn Ragnarsdóttir
Side view of turf church, Photo: Paul Acker

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Historic drawing of Glaumbaer Farm, Iceland
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Side view of turf church, Photo: Paul Acker
EXHIBITION: ALREÍÐI FEGURÐAR (LET BEAUTY RULE)
Paul Acker

An exhibition of decorative objects and art by William Morris and his associates opened in Reykjavík at the Kjarvalstaðir Gallery on Sunday, June 30. It is entitled Alreiði fegurðar, or in English, Let Beauty Rule. I was on the point of leaving Iceland on Friday, June 28 but was allowed a glimpse of the exhibition under construction. It had toured previously near Copenhagen and Stockholm but the Reykjavík exhibition will add a few artefacts, now owned by the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, that William had obtained while on his travels to Iceland in 1871 and 1873. These include a carved drinking horn (WMG H52), spoons (H40), and some woven wool apron strings with a decorative design (H55), evidence of William’s early interest in textiles.

Otherwise the show features some backlit stained glass, including a lady minstrel by William; wallpaper; textiles; and furniture and Kelmscott Press books, the precise number of which will depend upon how much will fit in the gallery space. I thank Roisin Inglesby, curator at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, that William had obtained while on his travels to Iceland in 1871 and 1873. These include a carved drinking horn (WMG H52), spoons (H40), and some woven wool apron strings with a decorative design (H55), evidence of William’s early interest in textiles.

Paul Acker is president of the William Morris Society in the United States.

Call for Applications
2020 JOSEPH R. DUNLAP MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP

The William Morris Society in the United States is calling for applications for the 2020 Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship. The deadline is December 1, 2019. Applications are judged by committee, and the decision will be announced by January 15, 2020.

The Dunlap Fellowship supports scholarly and creative work about William Morris. The fellowship offers funding of $1000 or more for research and other expenses, including travel to conferences and libraries. Projects may deal with any subject—biographical, literary, historical, social, artistic, political, typographical—relating to Morris. The Society also encourages translations of Morris’s works and the production of teaching materials (lesson plans and course materials) suitable for use at the elementary, secondary, college, or adult–education level. Applications are sought particularly from younger members of the Society and from those at the beginning of their careers. Recipients may be from any country and need not have an academic or institutional appointment, nor must recipients hold the Ph.D. Although recipients are not required to be members of the William Morris Society, we encourage those applying to join and to share in the benefits of membership.

In some years the Society offers a second, smaller fellowship, the William Morris Society Award (the amount to be determined by the committee of judges). The purpose and aims of this second award are the same as for the Dunlap Fellowship.

Applicants should send a two-page description of their projects, along with a c.v. and at least one letter of recommendation. For a translation project, please submit an additional letter from a recognized authority able to certify the applicant’s competence in both languages. For teaching materials, we ask also for a cover letter describing the ways in which the materials might be used in learning situations. The Society would be pleased to publish any completed translation or teaching materials on its website, but this is not a requirement.

Send applications by email (with the subject line “Application for the 2020 Dunlap Award”) to:
KellyAnn Fitzpatrick
kellyann.fitzpatrick@gmail.com
IAN FELCE, WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE ICELANDIC SAGAS.

Reviewed by Paul Acker

Ian Felce has written an original and useful book on William Morris and the Old Norse influence on his literary works. Felce builds on earlier studies such as, to go back a ways, the articles of Karl Litzenberg (but not his detail–rich 1933 dissertation, much of which is available online in the Morris Archive); articles on Morris’s translations by Swannell, Barribau and Aho; and more recent work by Florence Boos, David Ashurst, Marcus Wairthe and Andrew Wawn. In discussing Morris’s co–translator Eiríkr Magnússon, Felce cites Stefán Einarsson’s 1933 Icelandic–language biography, a work that not that many Morrisseans will have read. He compares the two men, saying “each made professional choices that may have been considered unconventional, or even eccentric, after initially planning to join the clergy” (p. 2). Elsewhere, Felce cites differing critical opinions on such questions as, did Rossetti’s affair with Jane Morris influence Morris’s turn to Icelandic and to the love triangle in Laxdæla saga in particular? (Felce devotes an entire chapter to “The Lovers of Gudrun” in The Earthly Paradise, which Morris wrote “a full two years before” he, his wife and Rossetti moved into Kelmscott Manor; p. 28.) Did his visits to Iceland contribute to his developing interest in socialism? (Felce agrees with Wawn that in the 1880s, Morris reinvented his Icelandic journeys to create ‘self–authenticating political testimonies’, p. 164). In short, Felce has done his homework and readers are guaranteed both a broad–ranging synthesis and something new on the topic.

Felce’s two main areas of interest are Morris’s evolving ideas of heroism, and the nature and likely causes of his particular style of translation. Early on, Morris was influenced by his reading of Carlyle and the fundamentally heroic “pursuit for the transcendental life” (p. 35). But in “The Lovers of Gudrun,” he located heroism more in “endurance of the earthly life,” which also involved a shift away from Arthurian to saga protagonists and to “a saga–based romance structure” (p. 37). Amusingly, Felce notes that Morris diverges from the saga account in treating Kiartan’s initial desire for Gudrun as “a kind of primal magnetism … Rapturous pleasure follows” (p. 8). Morris blurs the effect of imputations of unmanliness, avoiding words like “buttocks” and translating nagr as “faint–heart” instead of “nancy” (pp. 58, 60), but one might object (as Felce does elsewhere) that such choices are hardly surprising in a Victorian translator, and that they were made well in advance of the critical explorations of nhið or slanderous imputations of homosexuality undertaken by Folke Ström and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen. Nonetheless one can concur that “Unmanliness in the world of Morris’s translations seems to be synonymous with deficient fortitude, rather than moral indecency” (p. 62).

Felce continues this thread in a chapter on Grettis saga and “the courage of incapacity,” saying that Morris “rejected crudeness and ferocity in the saga heroes” (p. 81). Here he discusses the well–known episode in which the hero Grettir becomes afflicted with a fear of the dark because of a moonlit glimpse of the horrible revenant named Glámr. While Felce’s conclusions are certainly interesting, that Morris begins to adopt a new ideal of heroism “in which the felt experience of vulnerability and fallibility was integral to a manly life” (p. 110), I find his observations on the style of the passage to be somewhat off the mark.

The passage begins, “Tunglskin var mikit úti, og gluggagýykkn; hratt stundum fyrir, en stundum dró frá.” In English, rendering pretty much word for word, the passage translates as, “The moonlight was bright outside, and ‘window–thickness’ (i.e., there were gaps in the dense clouds); sometimes [the clouds] went in front [of the moon], and sometimes they drew away.” In 1914, G. A. Hight translated, “The moon was shining very brightly outside, with light clouds passing over it and hiding it now and again.” Morris translates, “Bright moonlight was there without, and the drift was broken, now drawn over the moon, now driven from off her’’ (p. 86). Felce observes, “By inverting the conventional English word order and choosing ‘without’ for úti (literally ‘out’ or ‘outside’) he creates a sense of portent that is less apparent in the Old Norse text” (p. 86). The inversion consists of placing “was there” after instead of before “bright moonlight,” an effect more mannered than portentous in my view. “Without” is a fairly standard Victorian option; R. W. Chambers uses it in 1921 when translating the passage as an analogue of the fight with Grettir in Beowulf (“There was bright moonshine and broken clouds without”). But what really needs remarking upon in Morris’s translation is the utter opacity of “and the drift was broken.” What is a drift exactly, and how does one break it? The clouds drift but are not ‘a drift’, and they let the light through now and again, but they are hardly ‘broken’. Morris has made the rather ordinary (if effectively timed) action of the clouds at once overly dramatic and obscure.
Felce’s fourth chapter draws on his article on Morris’s “ideal of literal translation” that appeared in Review of English Studies in 2016. It argues that Morris intended “to bridge the temporal and cultural gap between the imagined medieval Icelandic society that he celebrated in the sagas and the degraded British one that he lamented in the present” but that this attempt “was undermined by a misjudgement on his part of what his audience would recognize as familiar” (p. 111). Some readers admired the style but others, such as Guðbrandur Vigfússon, decried the “affectation of archaism,” the abuse of “pseudo–Middle–English–words.” Like Barribeau before him, Felce examines the style in detail by comparing Eiríkr Magnússon’s first drafts of kings’ sagas in Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla with Morris’s revised versions, as preserved in autograph manuscripts. Barribeau highlighted three features: Morris emulates the Icelandic morphology, word order and vocabulary. In the last category, he often uses words that have become utterly obscure in modern English, unless one habitually reads authors like Malory, as Morris did. Felce adds a fourth feature, that Morris inserts adverbs associated with Middle English, such as “thereunder” and “sithence,” even when they do not occur in the original. I suspect one could carry this process further, isolating Morris’ recurrent stylistic effects that are not directly connected to the close rendering of Old Norse.

In his final two chapters, Felce returns to Morris’s ideal of heroism. In Sigurd the Volsung, Felce discusses a phrase that Morris used, ‘deedfulness’, claiming that it and its opposite ‘deedlessness’ shape the ethical foundation of the poem, an ethos “in which it is virtuous to embrace earthly conditions without the possibility of any consolation” (p. 142). As May Morris said, “All his Icelandic study and travel, all his feeling of the North, led up to this” (p. 155). Afterwards Morris turned to “practical activism,” and I have already alluded to Felce’s conclusions about Iceland and socialism. Lastly, Felce discusses the influence of Old Norse on Morris’s late prose romances. The most significant distinguishing factor is how these romances as against the sagas “emphasize the community over the individual” (p. 166). However, the style of the Norse translations influenced the romances, “perhaps with the intention of evoking a ‘pure’ Germanic language before it became degraded by French” (p. 167). The saga landscapes also influenced the romances, creating story–worlds that help critics regard them as “the first modern fantasy novels in English” (p. 168). Felce concludes with suggestions for the direction of future research into Morris’s engagement with Old Norse literature. While I think that Felce’s claim is a bit overstated, that he offers “a more detailed analysis of the Old Norse sources than has previously been performed” (p. 172), he does effectively synthesize much previous work and makes many original additions to the subject.

Paul Acker is Professor Emeritus at Saint Louis University, and the author of Revising Oral Theory, and co–editor of The Poetic Edda and Revisiting the Poetic Edda. His poems have appeared most recently in Scandinavian Review and Sky Island Journal.

At once a work of history, biography, ethnography, and political theory, The Last Utopians compresses a vast amount of material into its 318 often–eloquent pages. Most immediately it offers an account of Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward, William Morris’s News from Nowhere, Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Herland, and Edward Carpenter’s writings featuring “the intermediate sex” (LGBT), all utopian fictions or treatises published between 1888 and 1915. This transatlantic frame permits a comparison of “utopian” impulses across a wide spectrum of places, ideologies, and temperaments—urban and pastoral; rational and “spiritual”; reformist, socialist, countercultural, and radical feminist—as well as between fin de siècle utopias.

MICHAEL ROBERTSON, THE LASTUTOPIANS: FOUR LATE NINETEENTH–CENTURY VISIONARIES AND THEIR LEGACY, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018

Reviewed by Florence S. Boos
and their partial descendants in our own time. Robertson’s four utopians are carefully selected for prophetic insights into issues still unresolved a century later—the need for social cohesion, meaningful work, economic, gender and sexual equality, and an affirmative, non-destructive relationship with nature. Accordingly a final section explores twenty-first century “prefigurative utopias” which embody at least some of the ideals of their predecessors.

Robertson first sets out to explore why these utopian works appeared in late nineteenth-century Britain and America, what goals their authors may have shared despite differences, and why he believes equivalent totalizing social schemes may seem less viable today. He conceives utopia broadly as “the envisioning of a transformed, better world” (6), a wide–tent definition that includes even authoritarian and destructive regimes. By contrast a progressive utopia offers hope, and he characterizes his four more enlightened subjects as “democratic socialists,” motivated by an immanenist view of spirituality, and largely critical of the patriarchal nuclear family. In each case he offers an account of the subject’s intellectual development before explaining his or her projected ideal societies, a juxtaposition which often suggests some ironies. Before the publication of Looking Backward, for example, Bellamy was a near–recluse who would likely have been quite unhappy in the highly regimented industrial society of Looking Backward; and Gilman, who struggled with actual motherhood throughout early adulthood, postulated a universal World Mother as the regenerating force of a transformed society. Carpenter similarly envisioned a free society founded on egalitarian ideals of male brotherhood, largely oblivious to the class privilege which had enabled him to establish a rural Derbyshire retreat in association with his partner George Merrill.

As mentioned, Robertson explores the intellectual and psychological origins which led each of his theorists to their insights—Gilman’s painful breakdown and years of introspective self–examination, and Carpenter’s identification with the distress of his unmarried sisters, left without emotional outlets in a stultifying upper middle class home. Bellamy’s mental trajectory seems the most unexpected, for after renouncing the legal career for which he had trained, he spent several years in an account of the subject’s intellectual development before explaining his or her projected ideal societies, a juxtaposition which often suggests some ironies. Before the publication of Looking Backward, for example, Bellamy was a near–recluse who would likely have been quite unhappy in the highly regimented industrial society of Looking Backward; and Gilman, who struggled with actual motherhood throughout early adulthood, postulated a universal World Mother as the regenerating force of a transformed society. Carpenter similarly envisioned a free society founded on egalitarian ideals of male brotherhood, largely oblivious to the class privilege which had enabled him to establish a rural Derbyshire retreat in association with his partner George Merrill.

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Though Looking Backward leaves much to be desired in terms of individual freedoms and gender equality, to Bellamy’s credit his views evolved during his later activism. Amazed at the spontaneous upswelling of “Nationalist clubs,” he abandoned his reclusive life in Chicopee Falls to found a Boston weekly newspaper, The New Nation (1891–94), shed his former elitist views to seek alliances with the woman’s movement, labor unions, progressive churches, and farmers’ organizations (68), and campaigned for the People’s Party, which in 1892 was to mount one of the most successful third party campaigns in US history. Backward’s less–noted sequel, Equality (1887) attempts to live up to its name regarding gender in presenting energetic women athletes, machinists, railway engineers, and factory managers, though it falls backward by permitting racial segregation “in the geographical areas that prefer it” (74).

Morris’s mental path to Nowhere was more consistent; as Robertson notes, “Morris had been journeying toward utopia his entire life” (79). His 52–page summary of Morris’s life and convictions provides an admirable introduction to its subject; it might serve as a handout to accompany the reading of News from Nowhere. Among other concerns, Robertson gives due attention to Morris’s lifelong love of architecture: “Morris loved Gothic buildings with an intensity that most people bring only to their romantic lives” (84). Emphasizing Morris’s artistry above his literary writings, Robertson interprets the ethos of his designs; of the early “Trellis” he notes, “It is a brilliant design, one of Morris’s greatest. The repeated squares of the trellis are simultaneously beautifully realistic and frankly metapoetic. … It is as if Morris wanted to dissolve the boundary between the domestic and the natural and turn the sturdy masonry of his clients’ houses into living forms. His wallpapers are imbued with a utopian desire for harmony with nature that suffuses his work in every medium” (92–93).

Throughout Robertson explores Morris’s attachment to his successive homes, and interestingly suggests that the proximity of Morris’s Hammersmith home to a working–class district (the Morrises had earlier lived in Kent and central London) intensified his discomfort at social inequity. He identifies the great courage it took for Morris to publically espouse socialism in 1882—the novelist George Gissing lamented, “Alas, what the devil is such a man doing in that galley? …He will inevitably coarsen himself in the company of ruffians” (106)—and the solidarity which inspired his faithful street preaching of socialism: “the work was exhausting. He had to shout to attract hearers, deal with hecklers, and endure harassment by the police” (108). He offers a lucid and impartial account of the troubled politics of the Socialist League, and notes that Morris is unique among the “last utopians” in facing honestly the problem of how the desirable social transformation of the sort they espoused could occur. Whereas Bellamy and Carpenter simply assumed that future citizens would voluntarily adopt the new ways, even against their material self–interest, and Gilman’s Herland postulates a long–past war in which most of the region’s males killed one another and the rest were slaughtered by Amazonian
warriors. By contrast, Nowhere's lengthy account of “the Great Change” embodies the reflections of someone who repeatedly debated exactly this topic with his fellow socialists.

Like others, Robertson finds that Nowhere reflects its author’s temperament in emphasizing the arts and manual labor, observing that the new society “affords little room, for example, to those who might be driven to conduct scientific research or develop improved technologies” (129). Morris’s vision is admittedly more weighted toward leisurely serendipity than even an ideally arranged actual society might be, but with some effort one could adapt at least part of Morris’s pastoral vision to include more scientists, caregivers, and perhaps even such cooperative enterprises as Morris and Co.

A fundamental tenet of Robertson’s approach is that idealized projections must be embodied in “lived utopias,” tested against actual experiments in creating a better shared life. Accordingly he narrates personal visits to several “intentional communities.” He travels first to the ecological shared-labor communes of Findhorn on Erraid in the…Scottish Hebrides and Twin Oaks in Virginia, each with its different internal organization and work practices; and then to the Takoma Village Cohousing settlement in Washington, D. C., one of dozens of co–housing arrangements which provide social interaction and mutual services: “[r]esidents share tools and, frequently, a hot tub or sauna or pool. They give each other rides, plant vegetables gardens together, and put up solar panels. In addition, they model forms of community that have attracted utopian thinkers for centuries” (251).

The author then visits “retreats” or temporary utopias, briefly hanging out with members of the Edward Carpenter Community, an annual gathering of gay men in England’s Lake District who are, in the words of one participant, seeking for “deeper human relationships” (255). He next joins the Walt Whitman memorial gathering of Radical Fairies in Vermont, highlighted by “a nighttime ritual in which participants move from one informal shrine to another scattered across the mountaintop while reciting portions of Whitman’s verse, a celebratory gay version of walking the Stations of the Cross” (258). More proximately, at a 2011 Occupy encampment in New York City Robertson encounters a cheerful Michael Moore, to whom he explains that he is researching a book about utopia; Moore smiles and opens his arms, “Congratulations! You’re there.” (253). Robertson’s final evaluation of the movement seems fair:

I found that even the briefest residence in a community dedicated to the simple life could defamiliarize the everyday world more effectively than the greatest of utopian fictions. …within an hour I was on the outskirts of Fredericksburg, surrounded by strip malls and bi–box stores. This common American landscape struck me with sudden, nightmarish power. I looked around as if viewing everything for the first time, repulsed by the casual ugliness of the huge asphalt parking lots and the utilitarian buildings, the slick, strident commercialism of the massive signs outside Walmart and Target and the dozens of fast–food restaurants; and the underlying dependence of it all on cheap oil and low–wage labor. Like Julian West awakening in nineteenth–century Boston near the end of Looking Backward, I found that a few days in an alternative society had estranged me from my surroundings and exposed the dystopian ugliness and injustice of everyday life. (249)
These “prefigurative utopias” prompt readers to think of their own examples, interpreting utopia in its widest political or imaginative senses—workers’ cooperatives in Youngstown, Ohio, perhaps, or volunteer classrooms in which prisoners enable their own education and plan lives after release. More modestly, could even a Morris–themed conference qualify as an “everyday utopia”?

The Last Utopians carries its erudition lightly, tucked neatly into footnotes and an annotated bibliography, and Robertson eschews sensationalism and gossip to concentrate on the more valuable insights offered by his utopians and their successors. Most importantly, however, The Last Utopians contributes to the array of books, extending from the Nicomachian Ethics onwards, that encourage readers to ponder the elusive nature of a “good society,” and consider how we may help create at least some of its essential features within the present.
main “true to nature” in their art. The watershed moment for change occurred soon after Ruskin’s own watercolor *Fragment of the Alps* (1854–1856) was viewed in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia in the American Exhibition of British Art (1857–58). The leader of the revolution was Charles Thomas Farrer, an English expatriate who arrived in New York in 1858 fresh from studying drawing with Ruskin and Dante Gabriel Rossetti at the Working Men’s College. On January 27, 1863, having just returned from service in the Union army, Farrer convened the first meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art in his Waverly Place studio in the New York University Building on Washington Square. During its brief existence, the Association numbered hundreds of members — scientists, journalist, lawyers, engineers, manufacturers, businessmen, and collectors. The majority of members, however, were people involved directly in the New York art world.

Artists John William Hill and his son, John Henry Hill, of Nyack, NY, long–time admirers of Ruskin and hosts of Charles Farrer when he first arrived in America, were early joiners, as were Charles Herbert Moore, William Trost Richards, Henry Roderick Newman, and William James Stillman, who was mentored by Ruskin while living in England in 1850. Beyond painters, the Association also included architects, like Russel Sturgis and Peter B. Wight, whose Venetian Gothic styled National Academy of Design building (1863–1866) on Twenty–Third Street and Fourth Avenue in New York City was inspired by Ruskin’s *The Stones of Venice* (1851–1853). There were also teachers and critics. Ruskin’s personal friend and executor of his estate, Charles Eliot Norton, who would later become Harvard University’s first Professor of Art, was a charter member, as was the critic, Clarence Cook. Cook served as the first editor of the Association’s monthly publication, *The New Path*, and helped to define its mission producing both a critical journal of artist members’ works and the voice of Ruskin in America. Janice Simon (“The New Path 1863–1865: “He Serves All, Who Dares Be True”) gives a thorough account of the development of the APR publication and its links with Ruskin and *The Germ* (January 1850 – April 1850), the like–minded journal of the Pre–Raphaelite Brotherhood in Britain.

Tim Barringer (“A Radical Legacy: The British Pre–Raphaelites and Global Pre–Raphaelitism”) provides a review of the contributions and work of the founding members of the English Pre–Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 and the influence that Ruskin had on transforming the movement from its original revivist trajectory to one which adopted “a realist approach in which science and photography, more than the efforts of early painters, would provide benchmarks for achievement.” It was that shift which would unite the American and British movements under the Ruskin banner. Mark Mitchell (“A Knowing Look: The American Pre–Raphaelite Still Life”) explores the scientific focus given by the APR to still life studies of flowers, dead birds, and geological formations with photo–realistic accuracy. Landscape subjects, like Farrer’s *Mount Tom* (1865), are
perhaps the favorite genre of the movement, and they too are given remarkable fidelity amplifying Ruskin’s tenant “to neither privilege nor exclude anything in nature, as if God has created everything of equal value, weight, and interest.”

Like their British counterparts, the APR were also observers of truth in the human condition. In America, the Civil War and the fight against slavery by the Union forces became a strong moral focus of the APR. Ruskin famously taught that the condition of a nation is linked directly to the condition of its art. According to Sophie Lynford (“Abolitionism and the American Pre–Raphaelite Experiment”), there was “an ethical connection between art, labor and society, and the APR pursued aggressive reform, their priorities including the abolition of slavery and reverence for the working man.” Unlike their Hudson River School contemporaries who painted idealized landscapes, the radicalism of the APR approach deliberately worked towards “the destabilization of the landscape genre induced by a hyperrealist style.” By painting nature realistically, showing both its flaws and beauty, the artists of the APR spoke to the need to understand a human society that contained similar contrasts: the beauty of one that promotes manual labor performed by free men versus one that uses slaves. Taken directly from Ruskin’s Stones of Venice, this contrast resonated strongly with the architect members of the APR. “Peter Wight and Russell Sturgis both saw in Gothic revival architecture a potent medium for promoting the egalitarian values they believed were absent elsewhere in American culture. Their commissions became laboratories for Ruskin’s theories on how medieval building practices could elevate the laborer.”

By the end of the Civil War, The New Path had already ceased publication, and, the American Pre–Raphaelite movement began to fall apart. William Stillman and Thomas Charles Farrer returned to England in 1871. Henry Roderick Newman settled in Florence in 1874 and continued to paint, Ruskin being one of his greatest patrons. At the invitation of Charles Elliot Norton, Charles Herbert Moore became an art teacher at Harvard. William Trost Richards continued as painter and tutor, and at least one of his students, Arthur Parton, can be considered a second–generation American Pre–Raphaelite.

Beautiful quality prints of the artworks, a detailed timeline of the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art, a biographical list with photos of those who were associated with it, and a comprehensive bibliography make this an invaluable addition to the library of anyone interested in Ruskin and his powerful influence beyond the 19th century England where he lived and wrote.


John Blewitt, ed. WILLIAM MORRIS & JOHN RUSKIN: A NEW ROAD ON WHICH THE WORLD SHOULD TRAVEL University of Exeter Press, 2019

This includes articles originally published in The Journal of William Morris Studies and new pieces written especially for this volume. Subjects include promotion of craft skills and meaningful work, division of labour, education and the environment, art and architecture and the contrasts between Ruskin’s Tory paternalism and Morris’s revolutionary socialism.

John Blewitt is an independent scholar who worked in further, higher, international and adult education for many years. His books include Understanding Sustainable Development (Routledge, 3rd ed., 2018), Media, Ecology and Conservation (Green Books, 2010), and The Ecology of Learning (Earthscan, 2006).
How do you teach someone like William Morris who made significant contributions to several different fields of study? Do you teach him as a writer, an artist, a designer, or a political activist? Do you lop off the part that fits your course best and leave the rest of the corpus to rot? The amputative approach has long been the prevailing one, and unsurprisingly so. Higher education in the twentieth century emphasized specialization over generalization, and Morris, who does not fit neatly into any disciplinary category, poses a challenge to the disciplinary needs of instructors, making it difficult, nigh impossible, for them to present Morris in all of his multivariable complexity. How can teachers succeed in capturing Morris’s multi-dimensionality within the exigencies of the modern educational system? This is a question that engages, in different ways, all the contributions in this volume.

Although an entire term could easily be spent on Morris, historically there have been very few opportunities for students to immerse oneself so completely in his oeuvre. Shakespeare, yes; Morris, no. Even at the graduate level, Morris tends to be part of a larger thematic course (e.g. Victorian literature) rather than the focal point. Given Morris’s expansive career and wide-ranging contributions, it has been nearly impossible to do him justice, which is a problem given that his work—in all its dimensions—seems to hang curiously together. It is difficult to grasp the significance of his literary works without reading them in relation to his politics, difficult to understand his politics without conceptualizing them in relation to his theories of craft, difficult to envision his aesthetic theories without reading his poetry, and so on. There is a reason why the major biographies of Morris are so long; Morris was never idle and mastered a whole array of arts and crafts (painting, perhaps, being an exception here). Just as his patterns for Morris & Co. are suggestive of endlessness, of borderless botanical growth with the seeming capacity to entwine its way around everything, so too every aspect of Morris’s multi-faceted career seems to connect with every other aspect.

In the twenty-first century, disciplinary silos are beginning to come down and interdisciplinary programs and integrative learning experiences are replacing them. But long before the word “interdisciplinary” entered the lexicon of higher education, Morris embodied that ideal. Thus, as you prepare your syllabi for next term, we hope you will draw inspiration from these essays about teaching Morris and that they will help you imagine how to bring greater interdisciplinary consideration to his life and works. Whether you only have fifteen minutes to talk about Morris, or an entire semester, and whether you are teaching college students or preschoolers, we hope you will find the following essays, representing a range of perspectives from a variety of scholars and teachers, to be useful, and perhaps even beautiful, as we ourselves have found them to be.

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EXHIBITION: THE RISE OF EVERYDAY DESIGN: THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN

An exhibition, "The Rise of Everyday Design: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain," was held at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, February 9–July 14, 2019. The exhibition contained more than 200 items, including books, drawings, furniture, decorative arts objects, photographs, and flyers, broadsides and advertising ephemera that offer a fuller, detailed look at the history of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

A companion volume, edited by exhibition curators Monica Penick and Christopher Long with contributions by Eric Anderson, Samuel Dodd, Carma Gorman, Willa Granger, Thomas A. Guiler, Rebecca J. Keyel, and Anna Nau. Published by Yale University Press, February 2019 in association with the Ransom Center, discusses the Arts and Crafts idea, its geographical reach, and its translation into everyday taste.

Penick and Long present a fresh look at the Arts and Crafts Movement, charting its origins in reformist ideals, its engagement with commercial culture, and its ultimate place in everyday households. In its spread from Britain to the United States, the Arts and Crafts Movement evolved from its roots in individual craftsmanship to a mainstream trend increasingly adapted for mass production by American retailers. Inspired by John Ruskin in Britain in the 1840s in response to what he saw as the corrosive forces of industrialization, the movement was profoundly transformed as its tenets of simple design, honest use of materials, and social value of handmade goods were widely adopted and commodified by companies like Sears, Roebuck and Co.

EXHIBITION: PRE–RAPHAELITE SISTERS

17 October 2019 – 26 January 2020
National Portrait Gallery, St Martin’s Place, London

This major exhibition is the first–ever to focus on the untold story of the women of Pre–Raphaelite art. 160 years after the first pictures were exhibited by the Pre–Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1849, Pre–Raphaelite Sisters, explores the overlooked contribution of twelve women to the Pre–Raphaelite movement, including Evelyn de Morgan, Effie Millais (nee Gray), Elizabeth Siddal and Joanna Wells (nee Boyce), an artist whose work has been largely omitted from the history of the movement.

Featuring new discoveries and unseen works from public and private collections across the world, the exhibition reveals the women behind the pictures. Through paintings, photographs, manuscripts and personal items, Pre–Raphaelite Sisters explores the significant roles they played as artists, models, muses and helpmeets who supported and sustained the artistic output of the Pre–Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Exhibit Catalog
by Jan Marsh and Peter Funnell

This book aims to redress the balance in showing just how engaged and central women were to the endeavour – as the subjects of the images themselves, certainly, but also in their production.
The William Morris Gallery is aiming to put on the first ever exhibition to explore Victorian William Morris and the modernist Bauhaus movement.

Although working half a century before the Bauhaus opened its doors in 1919, Morris’s ideas about art, craft and community had a profound influence on the seminal German design school. Walter Gropius, its founder, personally acknowledged the debt he owed to “Ruskin and Morris of England”.

But there has never been an exhibition exploring this connection. To correct this oversight, London’s William Morris Gallery is now fund raising £15,000 to stage a historic exhibition uniting the pioneering work of Morris and the Bauhaus.

As it’s a crowd–sourced fundraising effort, if you make a donation, you get goodies back in return.

For example £15 gets you some postcards, £25 gets you an exhibition tote bag and upwards to limited edition art prints and private tours of the exhibition.

The aim is to bring together more than 60 objects: textiles, furniture, ceramics, sculpture, photography and works on paper, some of which have never been displayed in the UK before. Objects made at the Bauhaus will be shown side–by–side with works by Morris and his circle.


The Arts & Crafts and Bauhaus movements share many common values. Perhaps the most important is the belief that design can change the world. We think it’s time these shared values were fully explored through the incredible artworks they inspired. Please help us stage this landmark exhibition, the first of its kind anywhere in the world.

EXHIBITION: VICTORIAN RADICALS: FROM THE PRE–RAPHAELITES TO THE ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT

October 11, 2019 – January 5, 2020
Cowden Gallery, San Antonio Texas

This exhibition offers an unprecedented selection of paintings, works on paper, and decorative arts—many never shown outside the UK—by three generations of revolutionary British artists and designers.

Drawn from the outstanding collection of the city of Birmingham, Victorian Radicals for the first time brings together paintings, works on paper, and decorative arts—many never shown outside the UK—to illuminate this most dynamic period of British art in an exhibition of unparalleled historical and visual richness.

Through approximately 145 objects by pioneering artists including Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne–Jones, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Elizabeth Siddall, among others, Victorian Radicals will represent the spectrum of avant–garde practices of the Victorian period, emphasizing the response of Britain’s first modern art movements to unfettered industrialization. These artists’ attention to detail, use of vibrant colors, and engagement with both literary themes and contemporary life will be illustrated through a selection of paintings, drawings, and watercolors presented alongside superb examples of decorative art.

Caring for the largest Pre–Raphaelite collection in the world and with extraordinarily rich holdings of Victorian fine and decorative art, Birmingham Museums Trust is uniquely positioned to tell the story of the Pre–Raphaelites and other foundational artistic movements of the modern era. The exhibition will explore the ideas that preoccupied artists and critics at the time—the relationship between art and nature; questions of class and gender identity; the value of the handmade versus machine production; and the search for beauty in an age of industry—issues that remain relevant and actively debated today.

“Victorian Radicals: From the Pre–Raphaelites to the Arts & Crafts Movement” is organized by the American Federation of Arts and Birmingham Museums Trust. The exhibition is accompanied by a new catalogue of the same title published by the American Federation of Arts and DelMonico Books•Prestel. This generously illustrated new study of the Victorian era features rarely seen works, provocative essays, and a striking, period–inspired design. Guest Curators are Tim Barringer, Paul Mellon Professor and Chair of the History of Art at Yale University, Martin Ellis, a freelance curator, lecturer, and broadcaster, and Victoria Osborne, Curator of Fine Art for Birmingham Museums Trust.

Future Locations:
• Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, Feb. 13–May 10, 2020
• Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV, June 20–Sept. 13, 2020
• The Frick Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, Oct. 29, 2020–Jan. 24, 2021
• Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico, March 4–May 30, 2021
MORRIS SOCIETY SESSIONS IN SEATTLE
MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION
2020 CONVENTION

Shortened abstracts for the session “Re-evaluating the Pre–Raphaelites” appear below, and those for the “Eco-socialism and the Late Victorians” will appear in the 2019.2 issue.

Re-evaluating the Pre–Raphaelites
Saturday, 11th January 2020, 8:30 AM.–9:45 AM

Moderator: Anna Wage
(Hobart and William Smith Colleges)

Andrea Wolk Rager (Case Western University): “I seek no dream... but rather the end of dreams: Exhibiting Edward Burne–Jones”

John Ruskin once categorized Edward Burne–Jones as a painter of the mythic school, a class of extraordinary artists who tend to elicit fiercely divergent reactions from the public. Writing in 1883, Ruskin proclaimed:

“I seek no dream... but rather the end of dreams; Exhibiting Edward Burne–Jones”

...in the case of ordinary painters, however peculiar their manner, people either like them, or pass them by with a merciful contempt... But in the case of painters of the mythic schools, people either greatly like them, or they dislike in a sort of frightened and angry way, as if they had been personally aggrieved.

Perhaps this explains the startling degree of hostility expressed by several critics in response to the exhibition Edward Burne–Jones when it opened at Tate Britain in the fall of 2018.

In my talk, I will explore the entrenchment of Burne–Jones as the Victorian “artist–dreamer” through five successive monographic exhibitions, beginning just after the artist’s death in 1898 and culminating in the Tate exhibition of 2018.6 However, I will also examine moments of resistance that challenge this perception, demonstrating that Burne–Jones was engaged in a fundamental defiance of the artistic, social, and political hierarchies of his age. I will propose ways in which this distortion of his legacy could be effectively overturned in future mediations of his work.

Monica Bowen (Seattle University): “The Radical Roots of William Morris and the Pre–Raphaelites”

The art exhibition Victorian Radicals: From the Pre–Raphaelites to the Arts and Crafts Movement is based on the argument that William Morris, the Pre–Raphaelites and their associates were “radicals” for their day in their interests, artistic styles, and political leanings. Today, common definitions for the word “radical” include “extreme” and “different,” but these definitions are misleading if one considers how Morris and the Pre–Raphaelites turned to the past and tradition for inspiration. Even though the Victorian Radicals exhibition catalog explains that the origin for “radical” means “root,” this definition is not integrated enough in the exhibition to emphasize how these artists were grounded in the past to create a future with a strong and moral foundation. This talk aims to remedy this issue and reconnect these “radical” artists with their “roots” in a visual way: through an analysis of art from the Victorian Radicals exhibition with trees, roots, stalks, and other forms of flora. In order to understand William Morris and the Pre–Raphaelites as “radical” and “avant–garde” in their pursuit of artistic and societal change, one must unearth the past and utilize the early meanings of these words.

Imogen Hart (University of California, Berkeley): “Race and the Radicals: Victorian Racial theory and the Arts and Crafts movement”

The political significance of the English Arts and Crafts movement has usually been located in the Socialist allegiances of its leading figures. To a lesser extent, the movement has received attention from feminist historians. This paper argues that the class and gender politics of the Arts and Crafts movement can only be fully understood in dialogue with the politics of race, which have rarely figured in accounts of the movement. It reveals that assumptions about race are embedded in Arts and Crafts ideology. Hopes and fears for the future of craft were closely bound up with contemporary concepts of racial development drawn from debates about evolutionary theory, class conflict, sexual difference and imperialism. Recent scholarship has explored the scientific and colonial contexts of Pre–Raphaelitism, but the implications of this work have yet to be fully explored by historians of the Arts and Crafts movement. Examining texts and objects by leading Arts and Crafts designers including Walter Crane, C. R. Ashbee, and William Morris, this paper considers the nationalism, primitivism, and utopianism of Arts and Crafts ideology in the context of race. Oscillating between visions of continuity and rupture, of individualism and collectivism, Arts and Crafts thinkers grappled with questions that had profound racial implications in Victorian England. Recent exhibitions unifying the Pre–Raphaelites and the Arts and Crafts movement have supported the movement’s famous challenge to the hierarchy of art and craft, which is imbricated with social hierarchies—not only those of class and gender, but also those of race—but how far do the radical politics of the Arts and Crafts movement extend into the realm of race? This talk re–evaluates the Arts and Crafts movement in the light of this question.


In this talk I will investigate the cultural location (history, ideology, national identity) of recent exhibitions’ applications of “modern” and “avant–garde” to the Pre–Raphaelites. I would argue for a historiography of current constructions of Pre–Raphaelite modernism. European artists, historians and critics c. 1900 debated which country’s artists epitomized the modern and segregated art into national “schools” with competing claims to modernity across Britain, France and Germany, a Euro–centric, parochial, provincialized battle over modernisms (plural). These critics labeled 1848 Brotherhood (PRB) artists as rebels, but c1900 the PRB, developed into diverse movements including Arts and Crafts, was thoroughly conventional, sanitized, domesticated, nationalized and lauded for its un–avant–garde economic success. PRB rebellion was nostalgically asserted to rival French modernism, e.g., Hunt and Millais both publicly attacked Impressionism. Recent exhibitions covering from 1848 to WWI still echo earlier debates when “modern” served ideological functions far beyond style. Curators anxiously champion PR as modern/avantgarde but by whose definition (Baudelaire’s? Ruskin’s? Clement Greenberg’s)? These terms resonate with 1900 nationalism and nostalgia in some of the curators’ un–poststructuralist topics (e.g., “origins”). If curators claim a distinct, monolithic PR modernity, unlike “pragmatic” Victorian modernism with “multiple and always contingent centers” I and aligned with the PRB’s ambitious, innovative attention to gender, class, science, urbanity and temporality, what is it? Why does modern/avant–garde matter now? Why do curators ignore postmodernist culture’s “power of representation,” and instead promote insulating modernism that echoes Victorian defenses against incursions of other, usually colonial, cultures into Englishness? Why not engage neo–Victorianism and the archives of ubiquitous Pre–Raphaelite art on book covers, greeting cards, etc.? The curators’ residual modernism defense reflects a failure to consider literary critiques of modernism, ignoring interdisciplinary opportunities. Finally, how, briefly, would Pre–Raphaelitism look if we considered postmodernism and neo–Victorianism as archives embracing changing public spaces and public receptions of Pre–Raphaelitism in the past and in the present?”

Ecosocialism and the Late Victorians
Sunday, 12 January 2020, 1:45 PM–3:00 PM

Moderator: Florence Boos
(University of Iowa)

Heidi Renée Aijala (University of Iowa): “Full Steam Ahead?: Ecosocialist Thinking in Late–Century Women’s Fiction”


Frank Palmeri (University of Miami): “William Morris’s Ecosocialism, Then and Now”

Dearborn House Event Saturday January 11

The William Morris Society is hosting an event Saturday January 11, 2020 at the Dearborn House in Historic Seattle.
The Last Word

Under the Commercial system constant war is necessary to keep the machine going: a war in which even Quakers are compelled to take a part. But in a condition of things in which all produce as all consume peace is possible, and war would at least be the exception and not the rule, and only in a condition of peace can we make the most of the gifts of nature, instead of wasting them as we do now.

"The Depression of Trade," 1885